

THE
WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D. D.

LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.

THE
WORKS
OF THE
RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD
WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D. D.
LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.
CONTAINING ALL HIS
SERMONS,
AS WELL THOSE PUBLISHED BY HIMSELF, AS THOSE SINCE HIS DEATH.
WITH A PREFACE,
Giving some account of the Author and his Writings;
A TABLE OF THE TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE
OCCASIONALLY EXPLAINED;
AND AN
Alphabetical Index
TO THE WHOLE.

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And will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

THE two great principles of human actions are hope and fear; no considering man ever undertaking any thing of moment, but either out of hope to get something which he thinks may do him good, or else out of fear of some evil which otherwise may fall upon him: and therefore he who made us, and endued us with these principles, the better to keep us within the compass of our duty to him, hath been graciously pleased to promise the best things we can ever hope for, to those who keep his commandments, and to threaten the worst we can ever fear, to those who keep them not; which one would think should do it effectually. And yet we find the contrary by daily experience; for, notwithstanding all God's threats and promises, men still go on in a continued course of transgressing his righteous laws: and the reason is, because although the word of God be the firmest ground in the world whereupon to build our hopes and fears, yet the things which he hath there promised and threatened, how great soever they are in themselves, yet being not so present and visible to us as those we converse with upon earth, men have little or no regard to them, at least in comparison of what more nearly affects their senses.

For men generally, and they also who are called Christians, live by sense, and not by faith. They do not really believe that God will do as he hath said ; and therefore are seldom or never moved with the hopes of what he hath promised, or with the fear of any thing which he hath threatened ; but with the hopes and fears of such things only as they themselves imagine may be good or evil for them. And their imaginations being so corrupted, as commonly to mistake good for evil, and evil for good ; hence it comes to pass that the lives of men be so directly contrary to the laws of God : neither can it be otherwise, until they are better persuaded of the truth and certainty of God's word. They can never do what he hath commanded, nor avoid what he hath forbidden, as they ought, until they believe that he himself will do according as he hath there promised and threatened ; whereas if they believed that, as certainly as they do what they see, or hear, or feel, they could not but act accordingly. So that unbelief is at the bottom of every sin that men are guilty of, and the great cause that so many are thereby ruined, and undone for ever, both in that already mentioned, and in many other respects, as I shall endeavour to demonstrate from the words which I have now read, where our Saviour himself calls that eternal ruin and destruction which sinful men are condemned to, *the portion of unbelievers.*

That we may understand these words aright, it will be necessary to take a short view of the context of our blessed Saviour. Having uttered a divine parable concerning the necessity of men's being always watchful, and ready to give up their accounts to him whensoever he shall call for them, St. Peter asked him, whether he spake that parable to them, his apostles, or *even unto all?* ver. 41. To this question, our Lord answers by another parable, touching all, but more particularly the apostles, and

their successors in the government and ministry of the church; saying, *Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath;* ver. 42, 43, 44. Where we may observe the greatness of the reward here promised to a faithful and wise steward, nothing less than all that his lord hath; for the lord here spoken of is the Lord of all things that are; and therefore all things that are, are here promised: as they are also where this Lord himself saith again, *He that overcometh shall inherit all things;* Rev. xxi. 7. All things therefore are here settled upon every one that faithfully serves this great and almighty Lord. But, on the other side, saith our Saviour, *if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men servants, and the maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.* As the wise servant shall have all things given for his portion, so this foolish servant shall have a portion too, but it must be with the unbelievers; that is, in other terms, the first shall be advanced to heaven, and the other cast down to hell, as the whole design of the parable plainly shews.

This therefore is that which I would chiefly observe from these words at present, even that God's condemning a person to hell-fire, is here expressed by his appointing such a person his portion with the unbelievers, and, by consequence, that hell is the portion of unbelievers. Christ himself saith it, and therefore we cannot doubt of it, but that it is so, and that he would have us take special notice of it, that

we may know how to prevent our falling into the same condemnation with them. But for our clearer understanding of it, we shall, by his assistance, consider,

I. What this portion of unbelievers is.

II. Who these unbelievers are, whose portion it is.

III. Why it is their portion.

The first question is, What this portion of unbelievers is: how they live in the other world: or, if ye will, what kind of place that is, which the holy Scriptures call hell. This, I confess, is a very melancholy subject; it cannot be treated, nor so much as seriously thought of, without horror and confusion. I cannot begin to cast my eye upon this dismal place, in order to my taking a survey of it, but I am struck with a panic fear and dread, lest I myself, or any one that hears me, should come thither. I am sure we have all deserved it, and it is of God's infinite mercy that we are not there already, that we are not at this very moment feeling, by our own woful experience, what it is to be in hell; but still want to have it described to us. But, alas! who is able to describe it? No one certainly that was never there, nor they who are there neither; the torments which they there endure, being far greater than any tongue is able to express. But why then should I offer at any thing towards it? Not that I think it possible to give you a full description of it; for when I have said all I can, if any of you should come thither, which God forbid, you will find all that I have said to be nothing in comparison of what you yourselves will feel. Neither do I offer at it, out of any delight I take in such an ungrateful subject: for it cannot be more ungrateful to you, than it is unto myself; you cannot be more uneasy in hearing, than I am in speaking of it. It was some time before I could persuade myself to it; and I could never have done it, but that I saw it abso-

lutely necessary to put you in mind of the dreadful consequences of your neglect of those means which God hath appointed for your obtaining eternal salvation by Jesus Christ. I have often told you of it already; I have advised you, I have exhorted you, I have prayed you in Christ's stead, that you would be reconciled to God, and to your duty to him; that you would not any longer despise or let slip these opportunities which you as yet enjoy, of performing your devotions unto God, and partaking of the mystical body and blood of your ever-blessed Redeemer, for the strengthening of faith, and all manner of grace and virtue in you, that you may serve God faithfully upon earth, and live with him for ever in heaven. But all hath been hitherto in vain, to many of those also, for which I must give account at the last day. Because men live in ease and plenty at present, they think they shall always do so, and therefore cannot be persuaded to take any care for the future; or if they do, it is only for the things of this world, as if they had no other world to live in, or did not care how they shall live in it; which is such an egregious folly and madness, that I do not know how I shall answer it to God, to you, or to myself, at the last day, if I should not forewarn you of that miserable estate and condition you will ere long be brought to, without a speedy and sincere repentance. And therefore how troublesome soever it may be, either to you or myself, I must be forced to do it. But that you may be sure that I say nothing of it but what you will find to be most certainly true, I shall say no more of it, than what ye have God's own word for. Ye cannot but all acknowledge, that he perfectly knows the state of those which he himself condemns: and if they consult this holy word, wherein he hath revealed as much of it as is necessary for us to know, ye need go no further; for there you will find it to be such,

that, if duly considered, it will make you dread the thoughts of ever coming into it.

Let us first hear what dreadful names this place is called by in holy Scripture: it is called *hell-fire*, Matt. v. 22. *The lake of fire and brimstone*, Rev. xx. 10. *The bottomless pit*, Rev. ix. 2. Luke viii. 31. *Everlasting punishment*, Matt. xxv. 46. *Everlasting shame and contempt*, Dan. xii. 2. *The blackness of darkness*, Jude 13. 2 Pet. ii. 17. *Outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth*, Matt. viii. 12. xxii. 13. *Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*, Mark ix. 44, 46. *Where they are tormented day and night for ever and ever*, Rev. xx. 10. *Where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night*, Rev. xiv. 11. *Where they drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and are tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb*, ver. 10. *Where men are destroyed both soul and body*. Matt. x. 28. *Where they are punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*, 2 Thess. i. 9. O terrible expressions! Do not our ears tingle, do not our hearts tremble, at the hearing of them? Yet this is the true state of the damned; this is the portion, the lamentable portion of unbelievers, as it is described and set forth in general by God himself: and therefore we may be confident that every tittle of it is true, without venturing to go thither to find whether it be so or no.

But if we would know something more particularly about it, our best way will be to consult the sentence whereby unbelievers will be condemned to this dismal place. For, as we cannot doubt but the sentence contains all they are condemned to; so we may be sure also, that it will be punctually executed in every

particular. Now for this we may remember, that he who at the last day will be Judge both of quick and dead, that we may not be surprised, hath told us beforehand, how he will then proceed in this great affair : that *he will come in his glory, attended with all the holy angels ; and being set upon the throne of his glory, all nations shall be gathered together before him ; and that he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats ; and that he will set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left* : by the *sheep*, meaning the righteous, as he himself explains it, or, which is all one, true believers ; by the *goats*, the wicked, or unbelievers. *Then shall the King, or Judge, say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, Matt. xxv. 31—34. Happy, thrice happy they, to whom the Judge of the whole world shall then pronounce this blessed sentence ! How joyful will they be, how pleasant will they look, when they see themselves set on his right hand, and the Judge turning his eye towards them, smiling upon them, and bidding them come to him, assuring them, that they are the blessed of his Father, whose good pleasure it is to give them the kingdom, and therefore bidding them all, and every one, go and take possession of it, as being his sons and heirs, saying, *Inherit the kingdom*, the kingdom of heaven, *prepared for you*, on purpose for you, *from the very foundation of the world* ! In which few words is doubtless comprehended all the joy and comfort, all the bliss and happiness, that any man either is or can be capable of.

But let us now hear what this righteous Judge will then say to unbelievers, to those who stand dejected on his left hand : upon them, with a frowning and angry countenance, he will pronounce this dreadful sentence, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into*

everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ; ver. 41. A dreadful sentence indeed! as full of dread and horror as so many words can hold ; yea, as all the words in all the languages in the world are able to express. The very repeating of it here is enough to make us all tremble : but what then will they do, who shall hear it pronounced upon themselves by the Judge of the whole world ? Every word in it will cut them to the heart, as being directly contrary to what they heard but just before pronounced upon others. To these the Judge said, *Come ;* to those, *Depart from me :* to these, *Come ye blessed ;* to those, *Depart, ye cursed :* to these, *Inherit the kingdom ;* to those, *Depart into everlasting fire :* to these, *Inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world ;* to those, *Go into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

I am loth to trespass so much upon your patience, as to trouble you with a more particular account of this sentence : I know it is a very ungrateful office : but howsoever, it is better for you to hear it explained, than to have it executed upon you. Let us therefore venture to look a little more narrowly into it.

The first word that the Judge will say to those on his left hand is, *Depart from me ;* and if he said no more, this would be enough to strike them dead. To hear Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, the only Saviour of the world, who had so often called upon them to come to him, that they might have life ; to hear him now say, *Depart from me ! be gone ! see my face no more !* who can bear it ? What an unspeakable change will this one word make in their condition ? It will strip them naked of all they either have, or hope for. By this they will be all deprived of every thing that can do them good, and fully assured, that they shall never enjoy the favour of God, nor any of the pleasures that are at his right hand ; but must live perpetually in ex-

treme poverty and want, not only of all true joy and comfort, but of every thing that can make their eternal state so much as tolerable: as we see the rich man in the Gospel had not so much as one drop of water to cool his tongue; and though he begged ever so earnestly for no more than what might chance to hang upon the tip of a man's finger dipped in water, yet he could not get that; Luke xvi. 24, 25. And so it will be as to every thing else that can give them any ease or refreshment: they must never look for it any more; for being departed from Christ, they will depart from all light, and love, and peace, and liberty, and health, and rest; from all goodness, compassion, and mercy; from all commodities and conveniences whatsoever, so as never to see one good day, no, not one good moment any more. This is that which is usually called, *pœna damni*, the punishment of loss; whereby men are punished with the loss, not only of the fruition of the chiefest good, but likewise of every thing that can be good for them; which of itself is so great a punishment, that some have thought it the greatest of all, greater than that of sense.

And yet, as if this was not great enough, these wretched creatures must not only depart from Christ, but he, who is the fountain of all blessings, will send them away with a curse upon them; saying, *Depart from me, ye cursed*; which word will be no sooner out of his mouth, but all the curses written in the law against sinners will immediately fasten upon them, and there stick for ever. Then their sins will all return upon them, and come as fresh into their minds as if they had been but just then committed, and every one will bring its sting and curse along with it. Job found something of this, when he cried out to God, *Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth*, Job xiii. 26. But this was nothing, in comparison of

what they that are in hell continually feel. They are made to possess the iniquities, not only of their youth, but of their whole lives, so as to be always full of the gall and bitterness that is in them. Here they could make a shift to forget their sins, or at least not to trouble themselves about them; but there their sins will all come rolling in upon them, like the waves of a troubled sea, one upon the back of another, and overwhelm them with grief and horror, do what they can. Their pride, their unbelief, their lives, their oaths, their perjuries, their frauds, their covetousness, their oppressions, their extortions, their lusts, their passions, their intemperance, their debaucheries of all sorts, their profanations of God's holy name, their contempt of his word, their neglect of his service, their slighting of his sacraments, and whatsoever else they ever did or spoke, or so much as thought contrary to God's commands, they will all now meet together like so many furies, haunting and tormenting them day and night, without giving them one moment of ease or respite. This is that worm which our Saviour saith *never dieth*, Mark ix. 44. but is always gnawing at their breasts, vexing and tormenting their whole soul, so that they perpetually fret and fume, and curse themselves, and wish ten thousand times they had been better, or had never been at all, or could cease to be, or could be any thing but what they are, but all in vain.

For hark what the Judge of all the earth will say further to them, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* As they must go therefore into fire, this fire must last for ever. What kind of fire it is, it doth not concern us to know; but it concerns us rather to take care that we never know it. Be sure it is such a fire as will *destroy both soul and body*, Matt. x. 28. The body will be continually in a most acute and violent fever, that would consume it to ashes, if it was not held up by Almighty God himself, on purpose that it may live

in the midst of this raging and tormenting flame. The rich glutton in the Gospel found it to be so, when being in hell, and seeing Abraham afar off, he cried unto him, and said, *Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame*; Luke xvi. 24. This flame, it seems, had made him so excessive hot and dry, that it was a great torment to him : and so doubtless it is to the whole body ; no part, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, being ever free from pain and anguish, the greatest, the sharpest, that can possibly be endured : but if any part of the man be in greater torment than other, it is the heart or soul ; it is there that the fire rageth the most horribly, the most fierce, the most furious, the most cruel and tormenting fire in the world, the fire of God's wrath and vengeance. This is that fire which burneth up the ungodly, who treasured up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and now they have it always burning in their breasts. He who made them is incensed against them, and he makes them see it too : But how can they be able to endure that sight ? To behold the almighty Creator and Governor of the world, the chiefest, the only good that is in it ; to see him angry and displeased with them, and pouring out the utmost viols of his wrath and indignation upon them ; this is a dreadful sight indeed ! who can bear it ? The very thinking of it is a terror to me ; but what then shall we think of those who are forced to undergo it everlastingly ? They certainly are in far greater misery and torment than we can think them to be.

Methinks I see them sighing and groaning, weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth, biting their lips, wringing their hands, fretting and fuming, and crying out, every one in the bitterness of his soul, *Wo is me ! for I am undone ! I am undone for*

ever! I have provoked the great God of heaven against me! I would not obey and serve him while I was upon earth, and now I am justly tormented in this flame! He was often pleased to tell me of it before, but, wicked wretch as I am, I would not believe it until now; but now I believe it, now I feel it to my cost! *The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; the terrors of God set themselves in array against me,* Job vi. 4. The Lord of hosts is angry: he that made me, he that kept me all my life long, he that was once so kind and merciful to me as to lay down his own life for me, he is now angry with me! He counts me for his enemy, and is now become an enemy to me! I see, I feel he is so! His wrath is waxen hot against me, and in me; my soul is all on a flame with it! What shall I do with myself! Who can dwell in this devouring fire! Who can live with these everlasting burnings! But whither can I go for refuge! Who can hide one from the wrath of the Lamb! O that I might have my request, even that it *would please God to destroy me, that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off,* Job vi. 9. that I might live no longer in this lake that burneth with such fire and brimstone as this is!

But, alas! they may complain and wish what they please, it is all to no purpose. They would never hearken unto God while they were upon earth, and now they are in hell, God will never hearken unto them; for the fire they are condemned to is everlasting: Christ himself saith so in many places of his holy word, and in this very sentence too, wherewith he will condemn them to it; and therefore they will find it to be so, notwithstanding what some false teachers may have told them to the contrary. And if any thing can aggravate the torment they are in, this certainly must do it, that they can see no end of it; but will be fully assured, that it will never end

at all ; that the *worm will never die, the fire will never be quenched*, Mark ix. 44. no, nor abated in the least : but when they have endured it ten thousand millions of ages, they must still endure it as many more, and after that as many more again, and so go on and on to all eternity. Oh ! what a fearful thing is it to fall into the hands of the living God ? How severe will he deal with unbelievers at the last day ? He will condemn them to be burnt alive ; in the most proper sense, to be burnt so, as always to live in the midst of burnings, yea, in that everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels : which, as it is the last, so it is the severest part of the sentence. He tells the righteous, that the kingdom they shall inherit was prepared for them ; *Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* : but he doth not tell the unbelievers, that the fire they must go to was prepared for them, but for the devil and his angels. And the reason is, because the angels fell, and therefore this fire was prepared for them, and they were all condemned to it before man was created. And it was designed at first only for them : for man being afterwards created in the image of God, every way pure and perfect, he might, if he would, have continued in the same estate ; and he was no sooner fallen, but he had a Saviour promised, by whom he and his whole posterity, if they would have believed in him, might have been restored to their first estate, and so might have never been in danger of hell-fire. But seeing many men, by not believing in this their Saviour, have no part or share in that salvation which is promised in him ; therefore God is justly pleased to condemn them to the same punishment which he had before prepared for the fallen angels. He did not think good to make another hell for them, besides that which he had already made : there was no need of that, for apostate men are as guilty before him, as the apostate

angels were; and therefore might justly be condemned, as they are here, to the same everlasting fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels. And this is put into the very sentence whereby they are condemned, as a great aggravation of the punishment they are condemned to.

And so doubtless it is a very great aggravation of the punishment of unbelievers, that they shall be made equal to the fallen angels in shame and misery, as the righteous are *equal to the holy angels* in bliss and glory, Luke xx. 36. For the devil and his angels be sure are condemned to the greatest torments that can be inflicted on them: and that the same should be inflicted upon sinful men too, this may justly make us every one cry out with Moses, at the terrible sight upon mount Sinai, *I exceedingly fear and quake*, Heb. xii. 21. I tremble exceedingly at the thoughts of this condemnation, which in all respects will be as severe upon men, as upon the devils themselves, and in some respects more: for it will greatly augment their misery and torment, that they must be always forced to live in such company; that whilst the saints or believers enjoy the sweet and pleasant conversation of the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and are every way like unto them in heaven, the wicked or unbelievers must converse perpetually with the unclean spirits, their most bitter and implacable enemies, so full of fury, and malice, and power too, where God permits them to exert it, that one of them is enough to affright a whole army of men out of their wits: but what then will a whole army of them do to one man, to one unarmed man, every way unable to help himself, as every unbeliever will there be in the midst of all these fiends of hell? What an hurry and confusion must they needs be in, who live with that wicked crew for whom hell-fire was at first prepared? What misery and torment do they suffer there, where they have no peace or quiet, neither

in themselves, nor yet from any' that are about them ; but though all be in the height of torment themselves, yet every one helps to torment another too ? What a miserable life do these wretched creatures live ? never free from the greatest pain, never out of the worst company that is in the whole world ; and that which is worst of all, they can never hope it shall be otherwise with them, but are fully assured that this must be their portion for ever, by him who cannot lie, when he said to them, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

By this we may know something of that dark and doleful place, which we call hell ; God grant that we may never know more of it, at least not experimentally. But this, I suppose, may be sufficient to prevail with us to take all the care we can, that we may never come there, nor go in the steps of the far greatest part of mankind, who walk directly in the way that leads thither, without ever looking before them, or considering whither it will bring them at last, even into that infernal pit, that is the portion of unbelievers.

Let us therefore now leave the place, and consider the inhabitants, these unbelievers, to whom, it seems, by our Saviour's own words, this dismal place doth in a peculiar manner belong ; so that they who are sent thither, are here said to have their portion appointed them with unbelievers : whereby we are fully assured, that all unbelievers do as certainly go to the place we have now been speaking of, as we have been speaking of it. And therefore it highly concerns us to know who these unbelievers are, that we may avoid their company, and take heed that we be not found in the number of them.

Now for this, we must first observe in general, that all who do not believe what God hath said in the books of the Old and New Testament, concerning himself, his Son, his holy Spirit, his works, his law,

his threats, his promises, and whatsoever else is there revealed by him ; all, I say, who do not actually and really believe that, are the unbelievers here spoken of : for God's word is the only ground of our faith. What he hath said, we are bound to believe only because he said it ; and he who doth not do so, whatsoever or howsoever he may believe besides, he is still, in a Scripture sense, an unbeliever. And whether he believe it yet or no, he will find it to be so at the last day.

This being premised in general, it will be easy to give a more particular account of the great number of unbelievers that always have been, or still are, in the world. For first, all heathens or pagans, who never had God's holy word, in which they should believe, preached or made known unto them, must needs be unbelievers ; for, as the apostle argues, *how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard ? And how shall they hear without a preacher ?* Rom. x. 14. Again, all Jews, who though they owned the Old Testament to be of divine inspiration, yet reject the New ; and through the blindness and hardness of their hearts deny Jesus to be the Christ, and therefore will not believe the whole word of God, and particularly not that part of it which is revealed to us by his only Son in his holy Gospel ; these be sure are all unbelievers. And so are all Turks and Mahometans, who prefer the Alcoran, the work of a wicked impostor, before the Bible, that is the word of God himself ; and therefore do not believe Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world, as he is there said to be. These are all so plainly unbelievers in a Gospel sense, that none can deny it who believe the Gospel to be true, that is, none but they who are unbelievers themselves.

But though these Heathens, Jews, and Turks, be all unbelievers, yet we must not think that they are all the unbelievers that are in the world : for, to

our shame and grief be it spoken, there are many such to be found among Christians themselves, among those who profess to believe Christ, and all that he hath said ; yea, all who only profess to do so, but do it not, are still unbelievers, notwithstanding their profession : for *it is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness*, Rom. x. 10. And therefore, whatsoever a man may profess with his mouth, or in outward shew, unless he be fully persuaded in his mind of the truth and certainty of all that God hath said in his holy word, and really in his heart believeth on our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as he is there revealed ; he is, after all, as truly an unbeliever, as they who never heard of him or his Gospel.

But are there any such among us ? Men that profess to believe the Gospel, and yet do it not ? Men that are called Christians, and yet are unbelievers ? I heartily wish there were not. But I fear, upon an impartial enquiry, we shall find that the greatest part of those who live within the pale of the church are as great unbelievers as they who live without it, or, at least, such who are so like them, that they shall have their portion with unbelievers.

For first, all that persist in any damnable heresy that overthroweth or undermineth the foundations of that religion which is revealed in the Gospel of Christ, howsoever they may pretend to believe the Scriptures, they really do not, but are as much unbelievers as they who reject them. As for example : the Arians and Socinians, who deny the most holy Trinity, the divinity of our blessed Saviour, and such great mysteries of our holy religion, because they, forsooth, are not able to comprehend them within the compass of their own reason and understanding : for it is plain, that such people believe no part of God's word as they ought, because it is his word, but because they understand it ; not because he saith it, but because their reason tells them

it is so ; and therefore do not believe God, but themselves. For if they believed any thing in God's word, merely upon his word, so as to make his assertion or revelation of it the only ground of their faith, as all true believers must do, then they could not but believe such mysteries also, which are as clearly asserted and revealed in God's word as any thing is which they pretend to understand. But I shall not insist at present upon these, because, blessed be God, there are not many of them : but some there are, too many to augment the number of unbelievers among us.

But the greatest number of them are such as St. Paul speaks of, *who profess that they know God, but in works they deny him*, Tit. i. 16. who pretend to own, that the Scriptures are the word of God, and that they therefore believe all that is there written ; and yet live quite contrary to it, or at least do not observe all that is there commanded. These are they which seem to be chiefly aimed at in my text : for the person here spoken of was a servant of God's own house, and had a considerable office there ; and therefore must needs acknowledge the Master of the house to be his Lord, and profess that he believed himself to be bound to do whatsoever this his Lord required of him. But seeing, instead of that, he fell to drinking and abusing his fellow-servants, therefore his Lord appoints him *his portion with the unbelievers*, or, as it is in St. Matthew, with *hypocrites*, Matt. xxiv. 51. Some think that our Saviour used both these words, and that St. Matthew records one, and St. Luke the other : but they both amount to the same thing : for every hypocrite is an unbeliever, as this servant was. Howsoever he might dissemble with his master, and make as if he was his faithful servant, yet by his works he shewed that he was not ; and therefore is justly reckoned among unbelievers, and hath his portion with them.

There are many such unbelievers in the midst of

Christ's own church, as militant here on earth : for he himself saith, *Many are called, but few chosen*, Matt. xx. 16. And, *many will say unto me at that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works ? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work iniquity*, Matt. vii. 22, 23. These were great professors indeed : they publicly owned Christ to be their Lord, they prophesied, they cast out devils, they wrought many wonderful things in his name : who can say but these were believers ? Christ himself can, and will, in effect, say so at the last day, unless they have done good as well as wonderful works in his name ; for he will profess to them, that he never knew them : and if he never knew or owned them for his disciples, whatsoever they might pretend, be sure they never believed aright in him. And therefore he in anger bids them be gone from him, and tells them the reason why he doth so, saying, *Depart from me, ye that work iniquity* ; which is the same in effect with that dreadful sentence before explained, where-with he will condemn all unbelievers at the last day, saying, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. And he will then give them the same reason too, saying, *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink, &c.* Matt. xxv. 42, &c. Not but that he will then enquire into their other sins as well as these ; but these being the most plain and obvious, and yet seldom taken notice of by men, he instanceth in them only for example sake, to shew how he will proceed at the last day in a strict examination of their whole lives, what duties they had omitted, as well as what sins they had committed, either against God or their neighbour. Much less must we think, as some ignorant people have done,

that because our Saviour here mentions only such acts of charity, that he will not enquire into our faith as well as manners: for they may as well gather from hence, that he will not then examine whether a man hath been holy, and just, and humble, and sober, and the like, but only whether he hath been charitable, as they can, that he will examine only how he hath lived, and not how he hath believed. But besides that we are assured from God's own word, that men must answer for their thoughts and opinions, as well as for their words and actions; and that there are damnable heresies, as well as damnable sins, 2 Pet. ii. 1. besides that, I say, our Saviour in this very place forewarns us, that he will examine how we stood affected towards him in those very acts of charity, which he here specifies: he will say to the righteous, *I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat, &c.* and, *Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,* ver. 40. and to the wicked, *Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, (or disciples,) ye did it not to me,* ver. 45. which plainly shews, that he will enquire how we performed these acts of charity; and that unless we did them out of respect to him, he will reckon them as nothing, at least, not as good works. But no man can respect Christ in any thing he doth, unless he believe in him: and therefore they who do not that, whatsoever else they do, will be sure to be condemned, as workers of iniquity; such as all unbelievers are. And as all unbelievers are workers of iniquity, so all workers of iniquity are unbelievers. All who live in any known sin, or in the neglect of any known duty, whatsoever profession they make of faith, how much soever they pretend to believe in Christ, and in the word of God, they do it not, but are as plainly unbelievers at the bottom, as they who never so much

as pretended any such thing ; as might easily be demonstrated by many arguments. I shall instance at present only in these few.

First, The principle of self-preservation is imprinted in the very nature of all men, as well as other creatures : no man will choose to do that which he believes will undo him. Who will drink that cup which he believes to be deadly poison ? Who will go to that place, where he believes he shall be killed as soon as he comes there ? Who will do that now, which he believes will make him miserable all his life after ? No man that hath the right use of his senses and reason can act so contrary to himself, to his own interest, and to that principle by which he and all men are acted. And yet this is our present case : God hath said in his word, *The soul that sinneth, it shall die*, Ezek. xviii. 20. *Tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul that doth evil*, Rom. ii. 9. *The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal*, Matt xxv. 26. Now if a man believes these and such like expressions that came from God himself, would he dare to allow himself in any sin, or in the neglect of any duty which God requires of him ? Would a man steal to-day, if he was sure that he shall die for it to-morrow ? Would he do any thing that God hath forbidden, if he believed at the same time that God would destroy him, both soul and body, in hell-fire ? Would he leave any thing undone, which God hath bid him do, if he really believed that he should thereby get more than all this world is worth ? It is impossible ; self-love and interest would not suffer him : and therefore they who continue in any wicked course of life may talk what they please, but they do not really believe either God's threats or promises, or any thing that he hath said in his holy word ; but are as great unbelievers as Turks or Heathens, or any that never heard of it.

The same appears also from the great power that true faith hath upon the minds of men, not only in its own nature, but likewise by the grace of God, which always accompanies and works together with it. Christ himself saith, that we *are sanctified by faith in him*, Acts xxvi. 18. St. Peter, that God *purifieth our heart by faith*, Acts xv. 9. St. Paul, that *Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith*, Eph. iii. 17. St. John, *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*, 1 John v. 4. And the same apostle in one place saith, *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*, 1 John v. 1. In another, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*, chap. iii. 9. From whence we may certainly conclude, that all they who are not holy, they who are not pure in heart, they who are not governed by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, they who do not overcome the world, they who commit or live in sin, they have not faith, not that quick and lively faith which the Gospel requires; but are all in the number of the unbelievers spoken of in my text.

But to prove this, I need not have gone from the place before quoted, where our Saviour saith, that he will say to those who profess to believe in him, but work iniquity, *Depart from me, ye that work iniquity*; for it is plain from hence, that all workers of iniquity shall be condemned to everlasting punishment: but it is as plain also from our Saviour's own words, that *he that believeth on him is not condemned*, John iii. 18. *But he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved*, Mark xvi. 16. From whence it necessarily follows, that they who work iniquity do not believe; for if they did, they could not be condemned: but seeing they will most certainly be all condemned, they are all as certainly unbelievers; and so they will find at the last day, when they shall have that dreadful portion which is allotted for them.

But you will say perhaps, in the last place, Why

is it their portion in such an especial manner, that they who are condemned to hell-fire, are here said to have their portion appointed them with unbelievers? Why with unbelievers rather than any other sort of sinners? To this we may answer in short, That unbelievers, as such, are the greatest sinners in the world; for not to believe what God saith, is such an affront to his divine Majesty, as cannot be named without horror: it is giving God himself the lie, as St. John observes, *He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar*, 1 John v. 10. And therefore if a man was guilty of no other sin but this, this is of itself sufficient to sink him into the lowest place in the bottomless pit: but, alas! they who are guilty of this, are guilty of all other sins too; for *without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. xi. 6. or do any thing else but sin, through the whole course of a man's life. So that unbelievers, of all men, are sure to be condemned; there is no help in the world for it: the means which God hath appointed for our salvation are all lost as to them. The word preached doth not profit them, not being mixed with faith in their hearing of it. Their praying avails them nothing, in that it is not the prayer of faith. The holy Scriptures are but a dead letter to them; and the Lord's supper itself mere bread and wine, in that they receive it not by faith: yea, the very blood of Christ will stand them in no stead, because they do not believe in him, and so do not perform the condition upon which pardon and salvation is promised in his name; for *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. *He therefore that believeth in him shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned*, as our Saviour himself hath also said, Mark xvi. 16. From whence we may infallibly conclude, that all unbe-

lievers, and none but they, will be condemned to that horrid place before described, *the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone* : which may therefore most properly be said to be their place or portion, as belonging peculiarly unto them, and to none else ; it being as certain, that all unbelievers shall be condemned to it, as it is, that all believers shall be saved from it.

And if so, how much doth it concern us all to believe, to believe aright, as the Gospel requires, so as to be fully persuaded in our minds of the truth and certainty of all and every thing that is revealed in God's holy word, with a sure trust and confidence of all and every one of the promises which are there made to mankind in Jesus Christ our Lord ? For without such a quick and lively faith, howsoever we may flatter ourselves at present, it is not long but we shall be tormented in that everlasting fire which is *prepared for the devil and his angels*. There is no way possible to avoid it ; it is the portion of unbelievers : and if we be unbelievers, it must be our portion for ever. Wherefore, brethren, we had need to look about us, and leave no stone unturned, but catch at all opportunities we can get, to beget and increase in us true faith, or a firm belief of God's word, by considering often with ourselves whose it is, the word of him who cannot lie ; by constant hearing and receiving it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh in them who believe, and none else ; by performing our daily devotions unto God, beseeching him for Christ Jesus' sake to help our unbelief, to banish all doubtful thoughts out of our hearts, and to increase our faith every day more and more ; by frequent receiving of that blessed sacrament, which was ordained on purpose to put us in mind of our Saviour, and to confirm and strengthen our faith in him ; by

meditating continually upon something or other that God hath said in his holy oracles, and exercising our faith accordingly upon it.

By the hearty and constant use of these means we may all attain to true faith, so as to be able to live by it, in a right belief of all the truths, in a holy fear of all the threatenings, in confident dependence upon all the promises, and in sincere obedience to all the laws, which Almighty God hath revealed to us in his holy word: then we shall be true believers indeed; for then our hearts will be always fixed, trusting in the Lord, and deriving power and virtue from him, to serve and honour him all the rest of our days: and then we need not fear that we shall ever have our portion with unbelievers in outer darkness; for we shall then *be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, and shall have it accordingly conferred upon us by him in whom we believe, Jesus Christ the righteous: *To whom with the Father and Holy Ghost be all honour and glory now and for ever.*

SERMON LXXIX.

FAITH THE PRINCIPLE OF INWARD PURITY.

ACTS xv. 9.

*And put no difference between us and them, purifying
their hearts by faith.*

HE that ever turns his eyes inward, may easily see all things disordered and out of tune there ; his understanding, his will, his passions, his memory, his conscience, all depraved, and disabled from executing their respective offices as they ought : and if he have any regard to his own good, he cannot but be very solicitous to know how his mind may be freed from these disorders, which make him so unfit for the work he came into the world about ; or how the faculties of his soul may be restored to their primitive tone and temper, so as to move and act, at least in some measure, according as they were at first designed to do. But the great question is, how this may be done : our modern, as well as the old heathen philosophers, direct us to the right use of our reason for it : and it cannot be denied, but that if our reason was still perfect, and we could always use it aright, the business might be soon effected. But if they would but impartially consult their own philosophy, and their great oracle reason, which they so much pretend to, they might easily perceive that this is plain begging the question : for it is evident,

from the constant experience of all mankind, (against which there is no arguing,) that our understanding, or reason itself, is corrupted and debased, and therefore wants rectifying as much as any other faculty in our souls; and that we rarely make a right use of that little, such as it is, that is left us: but men generally act as much without reason, if not contrary to it, as if they had none at all of any kind to act by. Indeed our natural reason serves us to very little purpose, but only in the common affairs of this life, and often fails us in those too; but as to the great work we came into the world about, wherein our souls are principally concerned, even the serving Almighty God, who sent us hither, so as to be happy for ever, reason is perfectly at a loss, no more able to direct or assist us in it, than as if there was no such thing in nature: as appears too plainly from the practice of all those who have nothing to govern themselves by, but that which we call reason. For although they have a confused notion of a Deity, and that something ought to be done for him in general; yet when they come to apply it to particulars, they run into such ridiculous extravagancies, as plainly shew they know not what to do.

But what course then must we take to heal the distempers of our souls, that we may use our reason and all our faculties aright in the things that belong to our everlasting peace? If we consult the oracles of God, those especially which are recorded in the New Testament, we may there clearly see the way which God himself hath made and prescribed for it: for he, seeing how all the powers wherewith he endued our souls are weakened and corrupted by the fall of our first parents, out of his infinite love and compassion to us, hath been graciously pleased to constitute and appoint, not any one, but a mixed act of several of them, to be the means of restoring them all to their primitive soundness and purity, even

that which we call faith, or believing. It is to this, and to this only, under God, that all things relating to our future state are ascribed all the Bible over; not only our pardon, justification, and reconciliation to Almighty God, but likewise the enlightening our reason or understanding, the regulating our wills, the subduing our passions, and so the reducing our whole souls into a right and sound temper: this also in holy Scripture is attributed wholly to our faith, as the great means whereby it may be effected, and without which it can never be so, whatsoever other means may be used for it.

But this being a thing that is not so commonly understood, or at least not so fully considered as it deserves, I shall endeavour to make it as plain and obvious as I can, from the words I have now read, being part of that divine speech which St. Peter made in the apostolical council, met together to decide the controversy then raised in the church, concerning the imposition of Jewish rites upon such Gentiles as were or should be converted to Christianity. Among other things St. Peter here puts the other apostles and elders (then assembled) in mind, how God was pleased to make choice of him, by whose mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe; and that God, who knows the hearts, bare them witness that they did accordingly believe upon his preaching the word to them, in that he gave them the Holy Ghost, even as he had before given it to the apostles themselves, ver. 7, 8. And then he adds, ver. 9, *and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith*: as if he had said, *God dealt with them just as he had dealt with us*, and so made no distinction between us and them; as appears plainly from his *purifying their hearts by faith as he did ours*. If their hearts had not been purified, they would not have been fit to receive the Holy Ghost; and therefore God's giving them

the Holy Ghost was an undeniable argument that he had purified their hearts, not by any legal ceremonies, nor any other way, but as he purified ours, even by faith.

Now that which I would have observed from hence at present is, that it is by faith that God purifieth the hearts of men. God is the efficient cause, it is he that doth it; but faith is the instrument or means by which he doth it. For the better understanding whereof it will be necessary to consider, what is here meant by purifying the heart; what by faith; how faith is the means of purifying the heart; and how God effects it by that means.

First therefore, by the *heart*, in this, as in most places of holy Scripture, we are to understand the inward or spiritual part of man, his mind or soul, with all its faculties or powers of acting upon objects within its reach: and so it denotes his reason or understanding, whereby he knows, thinks, argues, or judges of things; his will, with all its several motions, which we call passions or affections; his memory, whereby he retains in his mind what he hath seen, or heard, or read, and can recollect or call it to mind upon occasion; and his conscience also, whereby he accuseth or excuseth himself for any thing he hath spoken or done. All these are the several acts of one and the same soul, or, as it is here called, the heart; which at first was made most pure and spotless, acting in all respects exactly according to the will of him that made it, and to his end in making it; knowing all things it was bound to know, and thinking of all things just as they are; always choosing the better before the worse, and loving the best or chiefest good before all things else; keeping all things always fresh in its mind or memory that could be of any use, and therefore doing every thing so as to be able to reflect upon it with pleasure and delight. Thus God made man upright,

in his own likeness, breathing into him a most pure and perfect soul, every way agreeable to his own divine will and nature.

But now the case is quite altered ; for the heart of man is now perverted, or deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, *who can know it?* Jer. xvii. 9. Its powers are all shaken, its motions all irregular and disorderly ; nothing doth its office rightly ; both the *mind and conscience is defiled*, Tit. i. 15. Many have little or no understanding, but are like to the brutes that perish ; and they that have any, it is little better than imagination or conjecture : nay, we are not *sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves* that is right and good, 2 Cor. iii. 5. For our thoughts are so roving and desultory, that we can rarely fix them upon any thing ; and if we do, it is ten to one but we think wrong, even about the most common and obvious things that are before us. But as for those things that are above us, and out of sight, we seldom can think of them at all : and if we ever offer to raise our thoughts towards them, they immediately scatter and divide ; sometimes thinking one thing, sometimes another, seldom that which is right, and at the best we are never certain it is so : for our thoughts so often deceive us, that we can never trust them. Hence it is that so many fall into error and heresy : all men are naturally subject to it, and well pleased with it ; for their minds being vitiated and corrupted, error is more agreeable to them than truth is. And hence also it comes to pass, that men are generally averse to every thing that is truly good, and inclined to evil, merely because it is so. Neither is this the case only of some, but of all men by nature : they are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, *there is none that doeth good, no not one*, Psal. xiv. 3. So grievously is the heart of man corrupted and defiled ; *from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no sound-*

ness in it: nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, Isa. i. 6. nothing but erroneous opinions and vicious habits, folly and vanity, filth and corruption all over. By this we may see, what is here meant by purifying the heart; for the heart may then be properly said to be purified, when it is freed from these noisome diseases and distempers wherewith it is thus defiled; when it can clearly apprehend and discern between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, good and evil; when it can think aright of God, and of all things necessary to our eternal happiness; when it can receive the truth in the love of it; when it can delight in that which is good, and prefer it before vice and wickedness; when it can bring out of its treasure all good things, new and old, which it hath there laid up, and use them whensoever it hath occasion for them; when it can pass a right judgment upon its own actions, acquitting or condemning them as they really deserve: in short, the heart is then purified, when it is reduced in some measure to its first disposition, and set again to keep God's commandments, and to do all such good works as he hath prepared for men to walk in.

But how can a corrupt heart be thus purified? The apostle here tells us, it is done by faith, that is, by believing, or being fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of what God hath revealed to us in the holy Scriptures, concerning himself, his Son, his will, and all such things as are necessary for men to know, in order to their serving him aright here, and by consequence to their being happy for ever: for we not being able of ourselves to think or conceive aright of these things, Almighty God, in great compassion to our infirmity, hath been graciously pleased to give us them in writing, under his own hand, in words at length, such words as we commonly use with one another, and so may easily understand. Now if we believe or assent to any thing which God

hath thus said, because he said it, taking his word for it, this rectifies all our mistakes about it, and gives us a right notion of the thing, which otherwise we could never have had : as, for example, we know not of ourselves what to think of God, and can never do it as we ought ; but now that God himself hath told us what he is, and what he hath done, upon our believing his word, we are able to think of him as he himself would have us.

By this means we can conceive and think of God as of one that simply is existing in and of himself, and giving existence to all things else : that he is every where, knows all things, and can do whatsoever he will : that he is infinitely wise, and great, and just, and good : that he is Jehovah, the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth : that he made all things by his word, upholdeth all things by his power, and ordereth all things according to his own pleasure : that it is in him we live, and move, and have our being : that it is from him that we receive whatsoever we have or are : that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are all this one Jehovah, the Lord. For he himself having been pleased to assert these and such like things of himself in his holy word, upon our believing his word, our hearts are freed from all gross and false conceits of him ; for we conceive of him, not according to our own confused notions and opinions, but according to the divine revelations that he himself hath given us of himself ; and so are always sure that our thoughts of him are right, in that they are regulated by his own word.

So likewise for God the Son, as he is our Saviour and Redeemer : though he was made known and promised to our first parents, and in them to all mankind ; yet all the footsteps of it are now worn out of the hearts of men : so that no man naturally knows any more of him, than as if no man had ever heard

of him. And they who hear of him again without faith, are no way the better for it: their hearts are still the same, stuffed up with so much filth and corruption, that all which is said of him seems in their gross conceits to be altogether impossible. When St. Paul was speaking of Christ and his resurrection, the great Athenian philosophers looked upon all he said to be mere babbling, Acts xvii. 18. So it is at this day; all men have not faith, and they who have not, whatsoever their parts or learning may be, they can see no more of the mystery of godliness, than a blind man can see the sun: to them the Gospel is hid, and the preaching of Christ crucified no better than foolishness, as it seemed to the old Greeks, 1 Cor. i. 23.

But now faith dispels these mists, and clears up our apprehensions of those divine truths that are revealed in the Gospel. For if we believe them to be as they really are, revealed and attested by God himself, they come with that power and authority upon us, that how much soever they may seem above us, we cannot but look upon them as certain as any thing that lies before us. So that by faith, as it is the evidence of things not seen, it seems most plain and evident to us, that Jesus Christ is the eternal and only-begotten Son of God, one with the Father: that he in the fulness of time was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of a pure virgin, and so became man: that as such he died upon a cross for the sins of mankind, so as to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world: that he rose again the third day, and soon after went up to heaven: that he was there set at the right hand of God, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him: that he hath been there ever since, and is now appearing in the presence of God for all that believe in him, and interceding with him, that they may not perish, but have everlasting life: that he is therefore

able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them: and that he is the only Saviour of mankind, there being *no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12.

These, and such like fundamental articles of the Christian faith, being asserted in the Gospel by God himself, they who really believe that upon his word, have their hearts thereby possessed with so clear a sight, and so strong a sense of them, that they are thereby purified and cleansed from all false conceptions about their salvation: for their hearts are hereby fixed, trusting only in God their Saviour for it, and for all things necessary to their attainment of it; particularly that which we are now speaking of, even the way and manner how the hearts of men may be purified, in order to their salvation: they who believe the Gospel, there clearly see that it is done by faith; for that also is here positively asserted; and so it is by Christ himself, saying, *that we are sanctified by faith, that is in him*, Acts xxvi. 18. So also where he saith, *that we are sanctified by the truth, or word of God*, John xvii. 17, 19. *And now are ye clean through the word that I have spoken unto you*, John xv. 3. He plainly gives us to understand, that it is by his word as believed by us, and so abiding in us, ver. 7. that our hearts are cleansed from those impure conceits and evil thoughts which defile the man, as he elsewhere tells us, Matt. xv. 18. And therefore this apostle puts the defiled and unbelievers together, Tit. i. 15. to teach us, that all are defiled so long as unbelievers; but so long as they believe aright, they are immediately made clean and pure.

Neither is this all that faith doth towards purifying of our hearts: for Almighty God, in his holy word, hath not only discovered to us all such truths as are necessary to the rectifying our foul mistakes, and to

the informing our judgments aright concerning himself, and actually do so upon our believing of them ; but he hath there also revealed his will to us, what he would have us do, that we may serve and glorify him in the world, and at last attain everlasting life, through Christ our Saviour. It is true, he was pleased at first to write his law upon the fleshly tables of our hearts, but it is so defaced, that no man, by the light of nature, can read it there ; and therefore he was graciously pleased to write it over again with his own finger, upon two tables of stone : and that we may be sure to understand his meaning aright, he himself hath explained it, by his prophets in the Old Testament, and by his Son and his apostles in the New. And if we believe what is there written, we shall not only understand aright what he would have us do, but likewise strive all we can to do it. For believing it to be the will of God, the will of him that made and governs all the creatures in the world, and us among the rest, we can never be easy in our minds, unless we act according to it, for fear of incurring his displeasure, whom we believe to be so glorious and almighty a Being, as he really is. They who dare do otherwise, may be confident, that whatsoever they may pretend, they have no such thing as faith : if they had, that would soon awaken their conscience, clear their hearts of all irregular motions, and so incline them wholly to him and his holy laws, that so they may have his love and favour, whom they believe to be the chiefest, the only good in the world : so mightily doth faith operate upon the hearts of men, whensoever it comes upon them with its full strength : it turns all things upside down ; it casts out all proud conceits, all inordinate desires, all unruly passions, every thing that corrupts and defiles the heart, and so purifies or restores it, as far as it goes, to a pure and holy temper again.

But that it may do this great work the more effectually, God in his holy word hath been pleased not only to make known himself and his will to mankind, but he hath there also threatened so great punishments against those who break his laws, promised so many blessings to those who keep them, and hath intermixed many such divine truths among them, that, if firmly believed, must needs overpower the corrupt inclinations of our hearts, subdue all vicious habits, and keep us *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing*, or being fully assured, *that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* Our Lord himself saith, *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit*, John xv. 5. and then tells us what he means by his abiding in us, saying, *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you*, ver. 7. whereby he hath certified us, that if his words be fixed upon our hearts, so that we live with a constant belief of what he hath said, we shall bring forth not only some, but much fruit; we shall do all that is required of us.

To make this as plain and practical as I can, we may observe, that whatsoever was spoken by the prophets, was also the word of Christ, by whose Spirit they spoke, and therefore ought to be carefully observed by us: but in the Gospel we have many divine sentences uttered with his own mouth, which we ought to have a special regard to, and to look upon every one of them as an oracle of God, for so they all really were. His ancient people the Jews, when they had any occasion to consult him, or to ask him any material question, he was pleased to give them his responses, or his oracular answers, from between the cherubim over the mercy-seat in the tabernacle, or else by his Urim and Thummim. But now, as we have no opportunity, so we have no need of consulting him any such way; for in his

holy Gospel we have so many of his oracles or divine sentences recorded, that they are every way sufficient to satisfy all our doubts, and to resolve any question that we can ever have any occasion to consult him about, in reference to what we ought to do, that we may be saved. And if we diligently observe what he there saith, and lay it up faithfully in our hearts, so that his words may always abide in us, we shall be infallibly directed in every thing we ought to do ; and likewise most powerfully excited and strengthened in the doing of it, so as to abhor all manner of evil, and delight only in that which is good : which that we may the better understand, we shall briefly recollect some of his divine oracles, and shew what force they would have upon our minds, if once fixed there by a strong and lively faith.

Suppose then that our hearts are distracted with the cares of this life, so that we know not how to get such things as are needful for our present support ; let us but consult our oracle, and observe his answer, which is this, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*, Matt. vi. 33. Now if we really believe this answer of God our Saviour, and accordingly observe the course that he hath prescribed for it, by making it our chief care and study to serve God, so as to obtain his kingdom and righteousness, our hearts will then be at ease ; for we have his own word, the greatest security in the world, that we shall not only get what we thus seek, but all things else that are needful for us. And what need we then be any further anxious and solicitous about them ?

Suppose that we are apprehensive of some great danger from our fellow-creatures, so as to fear they may ruin us, or take away our lives ; what saith the answer of God ? *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell :*

Matt. x. 28. If we receive this answer with that faith which it deserves, our hearts will be no longer disturbed with the fear of what men can do unto us, but filled with the pure and holy fear of him who alone is able to make us happy or miserable for ever.

Suppose we, being ignorant of it, should have a mind to know where to meet our Saviour upon occasion, that we may have some conversation with him, and receive his blessing: if we search the Scriptures, we may there have it from his own mouth, saying, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*; Matt. xviii. 20. If we all believed this divine sentence, what flocking would there be to our churches? How constantly should we meet there at the hours of prayer? And how reverently should we behave ourselves in his company?

In like manner: are our hearts puffed up with vain and groundless hopes, that we shall get to heaven only by calling our Saviour, Lord, and professing his religion, whether we practise it or no? Let us hear what our Lord saith to this: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven*, Matt. vii. 21. If we hear what our Lord himself here saith, with faith, or a full persuasion of the truth of it, such vain hopes would immediately vanish, and we should set ourselves in good earnest to do the will of God, as ever we hope to get to heaven.

Are our minds infected with proud conceits of ourselves, and with an ill opinion of other people, so as to applaud our own, but judge and condemn other men's spiritual state and actions? Hark what the oracle of God saith, *Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*; ver. 1, 2. This, firmly be-

lieved, would soon bring down our high conceits, and make us judge ourselves rather than other men.

Are our hearts hardened in sin, so as not to repent and turn to God? Let us consult the oracle, and hear what God himself saith, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 3, 5. If we should hear a voice from heaven uttering these words, though by the mouth only of an angel, how should we be started at it? Would not our ears tingle, our hearts tremble, and our knees smite one against another, as Belshazzar's did, at his seeing the hand-writing upon the wall? How much more, if we really believed this to be the voice of God himself, uttered with his own mouth, as it really was? This would certainly break our stony hearts in pieces, melt them down into tears of sincere repentance, and turn them immediately from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that we may not perish everlastingly.

Are our hearts, on the other side, heavy laden with the burden of our sins, so as to be ready to sink down into despair? What doth our Lord say in this case? Hark! he saith, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*; Matt. xi. 28. *And him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out*; John vi. 37. What could he say, what can we desire more than this to support our drooping spirits? If we do but take him at his word, and accordingly apply ourselves by faith to him that said it, this will keep our hearts fixed, always trusting in the Lord; so far from despairing or doubting of his mercy, that we shall be always praising, and rejoicing in his holy name.

Are our hearts so much corrupted with vice and wickedness, that it is often breaking out at our lips by cursing, or swearing, or lying, or any such filthy words? They will soon be cleansed, if we do but lay these words of our Saviour close to them; *I say*

unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the day of judgment : for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned ; Matt. xii. 36, 37. For he that duly believes and considers this, as spoken by the Judge of the whole world, can never let any corrupt communication come out of his mouth, but that which is to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers, Eph. iv. 29.

Are our hearts doubtful about the other world, and therefore indifferent how we live in this? Let us but consult our great oracle, and we shall be fully satisfied in it. For he, speaking of ungodly and wicked men, saith, *These shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal ;* Matt. xxv. 46. Who can believe this, and yet remain doubtful how all sorts of men shall live hereafter, or careless how he himself lives here? No, a firm and constant belief of this would purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. It would turn the scale of our affections, and make us loath and abhor sin, as much as ever we loved it. It would put us upon constant and sincere endeavours to live so in all respects, that we may not be found at the last day among those which shall be condemned to everlasting punishment, but in the number of those blessed souls that shall inherit eternal life.

Thus I might run through all the oracles of God, and shew, that a firm and constant belief of them is the most sovereign remedy for all the distempers of our hearts, and the best means that can be used, whereby to purify and make them holy. But then we must observe withal, that this is only the means; it is God that is the principal agent; it is he that purifies our hearts by faith, not only because faith itself is his gift, Eph. ii. 8. so that whatsoever is done by it, must be ultimately ascribed unto him; but likewise because faith itself could never do the

work, unless he co-operated with it by his Holy Spirit, which he therefore always gives to those who believe; as our Lord himself also hath assured, saying, *He that believeth on me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* For this he spake, as this evangelist observes, *of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive,* John vii. 38, 39. which we see verified in many places of holy Scripture; particularly in the words before my text: for the heathen, which the apostle here speaks of, no sooner believed upon his preaching the word to them, but while he was yet speaking, *the Holy Ghost fell upon them,* Acts x. 44. Yea, the apostle here observes, that *God, who knows the hearts of all men, bare them witness that they did believe, by giving them the Holy Ghost,* Acts xv. 8. and then adds in my text, that *God put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.* From whence it appears, that he purified their hearts by faith, as it was accompanied, influenced, and strengthened by his own Holy Spirit, which he gave them upon their believing.

And this is the course that God always did, and still doth take, for the accomplishing this great work: *faith is the most proper means that can be used for the purifying the hearts of men.* But seeing faith cannot do it effectually of itself, as it is a man's own act; therefore God is pleased to come in with it by his Holy Spirit, exciting, quickening, directing, and confirming it, so as by it to cleanse the heart from all sin, and reduce it to such a temper, as he, through the merits of his Son, is graciously pleased to look upon us as pure and holy: and therefore he is here said, to *purify their hearts by faith.*

Now, from the words thus explained, we may observe, first, that there is but little faith in the world, but few that truly believe; I say truly; for I know there are many who profess to believe the

holy Scripture, so as to own it in general to be the word of God, and given by his inspiration; at least they do not deny it, nor perhaps doubt of it: but in the mean while they do not truly and actually believe, so as to be fully persuaded in their hearts of the truth and certainty of every thing that is there written; for if they did so, their hearts, as we have now seen, would most certainly be all purified. But most men's lives give us too much ground to fear, that their hearts are not right with God, and, by consequence, that they do not believe aright; but that our Lord had but too much reason to say, *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* Luke xviii. 8. I fear, if he should come now, he would find but little.

And whereas there hath been a great dispute, whether we are first justified and then sanctified, or sanctified first and then justified; from what we have now heard, we may easily perceive that there is no ground for any such dispute; but that we are sanctified and justified both together, at the same time, and by the same faith: by the same faith whereby we are accounted righteous before God, through the merits of his Son; by the same we are made sincerely righteous in ourselves, through the power of his Holy Spirit.

From hence we may likewise observe, how necessary it is for all men to believe, and how happy they are that do so: forasmuch as all unbelievers are certainly in a state of sin, and liable every moment to be condemned to everlasting punishment for it; whereas they who believe, have not only their sins all pardoned, but their hearts are also purified, and so are rightly disposed and qualified for the vision and fruition of the chiefest good; according to that divine sentence of our blessed Saviour, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*, Matt. v. 8.

Hence, lastly, we may see how much it concerns

us all, not only to profess, but really to believe the Gospel, as we are there required ; and, for that end, to take all opportunities of hearing God's word read and expounded, as the ordinary way whereby faith cometh, Rom. x. 17. to pray to God without ceasing, that he would both help our unbelief, and strengthen our faith ; and often to receive the holy sacrament ordained for that purpose. For it is by the constant exercise of ourselves, not in one or more, but in all these means, that faith is both begun, continued, and strengthened in us, so as to be able, by the assistance of God's Holy Spirit. to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, and make them pure and holy Let us therefore now resolve, by the grace of God, to do so, that we may live with a constant sense of God upon our minds ; that our faith may grow stronger and stronger every day ; that by it our minds may be enlightened, our sins subdued, and our hearts purified to that degree, that we may now shine as lights in the world, and be every way meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light ; and so may at last receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, through him in whom we believe, the eternal God our Saviour.

To whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all glory.

SERMON LXXX.

FAITH IN CHRIST, THE ONLY MEANS OF OVERCOMING
THE WORLD.

I JOHN V. 5.

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

UNBELIEF is not only a great sin of itself, but one great cause of all other sins. It may be truly called the mother of sin, as the devil is the father: for it was that which by his instigation brought forth sin at first into the world, and it is that which still maintains and keeps it. When the old serpent assaulted our first parents, the first attack he made was upon their faith: and when that was once shaken, he soon brought them down. God had said to Adam, and in him to the woman, which was not as yet taken out of him, *Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;* Gen. ii. 16, 17. But when the serpent came to the woman, the first thing he did was to call God's word into question; *Yea, saith he, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* Gen. iii. 1 and so tempted her to doubt whether God had ever said so or no, or whether he really meant as he said: and the woman began presently to make some doubt of it, as appears from her answer to the question; for she said to the

serpent, *We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die*, Gen. iii. 2, 3. In which answer, she did not keep close, as she should have done, to God's words, but deviated from them in several respects. God had not said, *Ye shall not eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden*, which was the tree of life, Gen. ii. 9. but, *Ye shall not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*: neither had God said, *Ye shall not touch it*; but only, *Ye shall not eat of it*: neither had he said, *Lest ye die*; but, *Ye shall surely die*: whereas that expression, *Lest ye die*, implies as if it was a question whether they should or no: so that she plainly began to doubt of the truth of what God had said.

This the serpent takes hold of; and perceiving her faith began to fail, to strike it quite dead, he said in plain terms, *Ye shall not surely die*; just contrary to what God had said: and he gives a reason for it too; for, saith he, *God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*, Gen. iii. 5. where he again contradicts the word of God, and yet hath the impudence to appeal to God himself for the proof of what he said. God had said, *they should die in the day they eat of that fruit*; and the serpent saith, *that in the day they eat of it their eyes should be opened*: yet nevertheless, upon the serpent's peremptory asserting it, the woman believed him rather than God; and therefore, *when she saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat*, v. 6. which certainly neither of them would have done, if they had firmly believed the word of God, when he said, *that in the day they eat thereof they should surely die*.

From whence it appears, that unbelief was the first sin that man fell into, and that which made way for all the other sins that mankind hath since committed : for all men being then contained in the first, he thus falling by his unbelief, all fell with him into that state of sin wherein they now lie, prone to all manner of vice and wickedness.

This, I confess, at first sight, may seem very remote to the words I have chosen for my text : but we shall see presently, that it will give us much light into them. For which purpose, we must further observe, that although all men are condemned for the unbelief of their first parents ; yet our most merciful Creator hath so ordered it, that none suffer, but for their own personal unbelief ; the sentence being never executed, but only upon those who are guilty of it themselves, in their own proper persons, as well as in their common head : for the same day on which the first Adam fell by his not believing the word of God, God was pleased to raise up another Adam, his only-begotten Son, his own eternal Word, *that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life*, John iii. 16. So that as unbelief was the occasion of our fall and destruction in the first Adam, faith is now made the condition of our rise and salvation by the second : and therefore no man can now perish, but by reason of his own unbelief ; because he will not believe in the Son of God, nor in what God hath said concerning him : for if he doth that, he hath God's word for it, that he shall not perish ; as Adam had it, that he should die if he eat of the forbidden fruit. There is only this difference between them, that God spake to Adam by way of threatening, he speaks to us by way of promise : but both are equally the word of God ; and we have the same ground to believe what he hath promised to us in Christ, as Adam had to believe what he had threatened to him ; or rather,

if possible, more: forasmuch as the threatening was only by the word spoken, the promise is by the Word incarnate; *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*, John i. 14. in our own nature united to his divine person. And if we do but rightly believe in this Word, we shall as certainly be saved by him, as we were condemned by our unbelief in the first man.

This the devil knows well enough, and so he did from the beginning: and therefore, as he overcame our first parents, by tempting them not to believe God's word: so he hath endeavoured ever since, and still doth, either to destroy or corrupt men's faith in Christ. If he can but do that, he cares for no more, for then he is sure of them. For this purpose therefore he doth all he can to keep men off from believing any thing at all concerning Christ; and if he cannot do that, then he strives to make them believe wrong, otherwise than God hath said. But his main drift and design is to tempt men to deny or doubt of Christ's divinity, as the main foundation upon which our faith is grounded. And if he can once prevail upon men to do that, he need not trouble himself to tempt them to any notorious vice; for how well soever they may seem to live, as to outward appearance, they can never truly mortify any one sin, nor do any one act that will be acceptable unto God: for whatsoever they may pretend, they can never overcome the world, no more than their first parents did, by reason of their unbelief. This we may be sure of, for we have God's own word for it; saying by his apostle, *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* Which is the same as if he had positively said, No man whatsoever can overcome the world, but only he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.

But that ye may more fully understand both the sense and certainty of this divine proposition, we

must first explain the terms in each part of it, and then confirm the truth of the whole. The proposition consisteth of two parts, and accordingly the terms to be explained are only these two in general; first, what it is to overcome the world: and then, what it is to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. When these terms are explained, it will be easy to put them together, and to shew the necessary connection between them, and to the truth and certainty of the whole proposition.

To know what it is to overcome the world, we must first consider what that world is which we are to overcome. But we need not go far to find out that it is a term which this apostle often useth, especially in this epistle: and therefore, lest we should be mistaken in it, he himself is pleased to tell us, in effect, what he means by it; where he saith, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*, 1 John ii. 15. For here he plainly opposeth the world to God, and makes use of that word to signify that which is repugnant or contrary to the divine will and nature; for he makes the love of God and of the world to be inconsistent, so that no man can love them both together: *He who loves God, cannot love the world; but he that loves the world, cannot love God*. And therefore by the world, the apostle here means the same that his Master did by the word mammon, where he saith, *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon*, Matt. vi. 24. But that we may be sure to understand the full meaning and extent of the word, the apostle, in the following words, tells us what the world, in his sense of the word, consists of: *for*, saith he, *all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father*,

but is of the world, 1 John ii. 16. Where he again asserts the world to be contrary to God, and reduceth all that is so in it to three heads; sensual pleasures, earthly riches, and pride or vain-glory: so that these three things make up the whole world, in the sense wherein he useth the word.

Now by this we may easily discover what he means by overcoming the world: for he can mean nothing else but the suppressing all inordinate desires of the pleasures, riches, and honours of this world; and so every thing that hinders us from doing our duty to God, and keeping his commandments: as appears also from the context itself. In the next verse but one before my text, the apostle saith, that to the regenerate, of whom he speaks, God's *commandments are not grievous*: and in the next verse he gives the reason of it; *for*, saith he, *whosoever is born of God overcometh the world*: which would be no reason at all, unless, by overcoming the world, he meant subduing our affections to the things of this world, which are repugnant to, and oppose themselves against, God's commandments, and so make them grievous to us, because they cross our corrupt inclinations. Whereas they who are regenerate, having their minds taken off from the things of this world, they are thereby freed from those obstacles which made the keeping of God's commandments difficult and grievous to them, and so observe them with ease and pleasure. And therefore, by overcoming the world in my text, he must needs mean the same thing, even such a subduing and suppressing our love and desire of the pleasures, riches, and honours of this world, that we can with ease walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. So that no man can be truly said to have overcome the world, until he hath got so much above it, as to make it his constant care to avoid all manner of evil, and to do all the good he can. This is that which

the apostle here saith no man can do, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God : the meaning of which words comes next to be considered.

There be several persons who in the holy Scriptures are said to be the sons of God, even all that are regenerate, and born again of water and the Holy Ghost ; but these are made the sons of God, because Jesus, their head, to whom they are united, is so ; yea it is he who makes them so : *for as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name,* John i. 12. And he who can give power to others to become the sons of God, must needs be so himself in a more eminent and peculiar manner : he is not only his Son, as others are, but his only-begotten Son, as none is ever called but himself ; but he is frequently called so, both by others, and by himself too, who best knew how he was the Son of God : *God so loved the world,* saith he, *that he gave his only-begotten Son,* meaning himself, John iii. 16. and so elsewhere. From whence it is manifest, that he is the Son of God, not by adoption, nor by regeneration, but by real generation ; for he was begotten of God the Father, and therefore is his Son in the highest and most proper sense that can be ; so as to be in all respects of the self-same nature with the Father, according to the common notion of generation.

And that we might not be altogether ignorant of the way how he was begotten of the Father, he himself acquaints us with as much of it as is necessary, or indeed possible for us to know, where he saith, *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself,* John v. 25. To have life in himself is proper and peculiar only to God ; all things else that live, besides him, living not in themselves, but in him : *for in him we live,* saith the apostle, Acts xvii. 28. But this essential property of God, and so the divine essence itself, the Father

gave or communicated to the Son; and that too in the same manner as it is in himself, without any difference or distinction at all, but only that the one gave it, and therefore is properly the Father begetting; the other received it, and therefore is properly the Son begotten of him. And hence it is, that although they be both the same God, as having the same divine essence each in himself; yet the Son is so the same God, that, according to what the Council of Nice declared out of the holy Scriptures, he is *God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made; but still of one substance with the Father*; as he himself also declared, saying, *I and the Father are one*, John x. 30. Ἐσμεν, *we are*, in the plural number, and therefore distinct subsistences; but, *we are one*, in the singular number: not εἷς, *one person*, but εἷς ἔσμεν, *we are one Being, one Essence, one Substance, one Jehovah, one God*. And so they who heard him speak these words plainly understood him, for they took up stones to cast at him; and the reason they gave him for it was, because, as they said to him, *thou being a man makest thyself God*, ver. 33. In like manner, upon another occasion, when Jesus had called God his Father, the Jews sought to kill him, because he said that God was his Father, *making himself equal with God*, John v. 18. which shews, that when he called himself *the Son of God*, or said, *God was his Father*, they apprehended his meaning to be, that he himself was God equal to the Father: and so plainly it was, as the catholic church likewise hath all along believed.

In this sense therefore we ought to believe Jesus to be the Son of God, because this is the sense wherein the holy Scriptures declare him to be so: and he that believes it in any other sense, his faith is groundless and null, as having no foundation in God's word; so that he cannot properly be said to believe it at all. And verily it is our unspeakable

comfort and happiness, that this great fundamental article of our whole religion, even that Jesus Christ is so the Son of God, as to be himself truly God, of the same nature, substance, and glory with the Father, is so clearly, so fully, so frequently revealed to us in the holy Scriptures, that none, unless they wilfully shut their eyes, but may easily see it; and none can deny or doubt of it, but only such as the devil hath got the same power over which he had over our first parents, to make them deny or doubt of what God himself hath said.

But I hope none here present do so; and therefore I need not insist any longer upon it, especially considering that it hath been so fully proved by many learned men, beyond all contradiction. Howsoever, that I may contribute something towards the confirming your faith in it, I shall only observe two or three things, not usually taken notice of, in our Saviour's life and actions while he was upon earth, which plainly demonstrate him to be the true God.

First, therefore, when Satan would have had Jesus fall down and worship him, *Jesus said unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, Matt. iv. 10. which shews, that he judged it to be utterly unlawful to worship any but the true God, and detested the very mention of it; and yet he himself had such worship often performed to him: a leper worshipped him, Matt. viii. 2. A certain ruler worshipped him, ch. ix. 18. The woman of Canaan worshipped him, ch. xv. 25. The man that was born blind worshipped him, John ix. 38. His own disciples worshipped him, Matt. xiv. 33. The women that came to his sepulchre after he was risen worshipped him, Matt. xxviii. 9. His apostles also worshipped him after his resurrection, Matt. xxviii. 17. and again at his ascension, Luke xxiv. 52. All these, and doubtless many others, worshipped him, and yet

he never rebuked them for it ; as he would certainly have done, if he had not been the true God, to whom alone such worship was due, according to his own words. All acknowledge him to be a good man ; but no good man, nor any good creature whatsoever, would have suffered himself to be thus worshipped as a God, without reproving those who did it. When Cornelius fell down to worship Peter, he took him up, saying, *Stand up, I myself also am a man*, Acts x. 25. When the priest of Jupiter, with the men of Lystra, would have done sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, the apostles rent their clothes, and ran in among them, crying out, and saying, *Sirs, why do ye these things ? We also are men of like passions with you*, Acts xiv. 14, 15. When St. John would have worshipped the angel, the angel said to him, *See thou do it not ; I am thy fellow-servant : worship God*, Rev. xix. 10. and so again, chap. xxii. 9. But we find nothing of this in Christ : when people worshipped him, he never forbad them, nor reprov'd them for it ; but accepted of it, and shewed himself to be well-pleased with it, by working miracles for them that did it : which he be sure would never have done, if he had not been the true God, whom all the creatures in the world are bound to worship. But it is no wonder that he accepted of divine worship from men, when it is the divine command, that *all the angels worship him*, Heb. i. 6. *that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John v. 23. and, *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ;* Phil. ii. 10, 11

Again I observe, that Christ, in his revelation of the divine will, always speaks as from himself in his own name. He never saith, as the prophets are wont to do, *The Lord hath spoken ;* or, *Thus saith*

the Lord: but, Thus I say; I say unto you, Swear not at all. I say unto you, Love your enemies. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And so all along he speaks with authority, with divine authority; not as the scribes, nor as the prophets, nor as any other creature must have done, that would not usurp upon God's prerogative: neither doth he call upon men, as the prophets do, *to turn unto the Lord*, but bids them come to him; *Come to me all ye that labour, take my yoke upon you, learn of me*, Matt. xi. 28, 29. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me*, John xiv. 1. *Abide in me, and I in you*, John xv. 4. *If ye love me, keep my commandments, &c.* Well might the officers, which were sent to apprehend him, say, *Never man spake like this man*, John vii. 46. For this could not be the language of man, but God, especially seeing he makes his promises, as well as laws, in his own name, and such promises which none but God can ever perform, and therefore would never make: as, *I will give you rest*, Matt. xi. 28. *I will send the Comforter*, John xvi. 7. *I will raise him up at the last day*, John vi. 39, 44. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me*, chap. xii. 32. *Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, Matt. xvi. 18. Many such expressions came from him, which discovered him to be God, as plainly as those places do it, where he is expressly called so.

But that which I look upon as most observable of all is, that he did not only speak, but act in his own name, and by his own power. He saith, I confess, in one place, *I am come in my Father's name*, John v. 43. and in another, *The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me*, John x. 25. But we must observe, that he doth not say, in the name of God, but *of his Father*. If he had said, in the name of God, some might have been apt to think, though

without ground, that he himself was not God; for if he was, it would have been more proper to have said, he came or acted in his own name. But, to prevent that mistake, he saith only in the name of the Father, and so he acted even as God in the name of the Father, because he received his divine essence, and so the power by which he acted, from the Father. In which sense he saith, *I can of myself do nothing*, John v. 30. and, *I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things*, chap. viii. 28. and, *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not*, chap. x. 37. And so all along he speaks of the Father, as the person from whom he received his power, as being his Son; but still he acted by that power immediately from himself, as being God.

To prove this, we need go no farther than the works of creation, wherein God did most clearly exert and shew forth his power and Godhead, in producing all things out of nothing by a word of his mouth: he only said, *Let there be light, and there was light*, Gen. i. 3. *Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together in one place, and it was so*, ver. 9. *Let the earth bring forth grass, and it was so*, ver. 11. Thus the whole creation was finished, only by God's expressing and signifying his will, that every thing should be as he pleased, and so it was; which was such an act of divine power, that no creature could ever pretend to it, nor indeed can be capable of it, it being an incommunicable perfection of the divine nature to act so immediately in and of itself, and perfectly according to its own will.

And yet this was the way that Christ acted when he was upon earth, and so demonstrated his divine power and glory the same way as God had done it in making of the world. For when there came a leper to him, saying, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*, Jesus only said, *I will, be thou clean*; and it

was so ; *the leprosy was immediately cleansed*, Matt. viii. 2, 3. When at several times he saw Peter, and Andrew, and James, and John, and Levi the son of Alphaeus, he said, *Follow me*, and it was so ; *they left all, and followed him*, Matt. iv. 18, 21. Mark ii. 14. When there arose a great storm, and the waves of the sea beat into the ship where he was, he only said, *Peace, be still*, and it was so ; *the wind ceased, and there was a great calm*, Mark iv. 38. When he came to Jairus's house, and found his daughter lying dead, he only said, *Talitha cumi, Damsel, arise* ; and it was so ; *the damsel straightway arose, and walked about*, Mark v. 41. When they brought to him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, he only said, *Ephphatha, be thou opened*, and it was so ; *for straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain*, Mark vii. 34, 35. When he saw a fig-tree with leaves, and no fruit upon it, he only said, *Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever* ; and it was so ; *for presently the fig-tree withered away*, Matt. xxi. 19. When he came near the city Nain, and saw a dead man carried out to be buried, he only said, *Young man, I say unto thee, Arise* ; and it was so ; *for he that was dead sat up, and began to speak*, Luke vii. 14. When Lazarus had been dead four days, and was laid in his grave, he only said, *Lazarus, come forth* ; and it was so ; *he that was dead came forth*, John xi. 43. There are many such instances to be found in the Gospel, of Christ's acting merely by his word ; and, which, if it be possible, is more remarkable, he did the same by his apostles, who wrought miracles only in his name : as when Peter saw a lame man, he said, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk* ; and he did so, Acts iii. 6, 7. At Lystra he said to the cripple, as it is in the old Greek manuscripts, *In the name of Jesus Christ, stand upright on thy feet* ;

and so he did, Acts xiv. 10. Ananias said unto Saul, *The Lord (even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest) hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight*, Acts ix. 17. which gives light to Acts xxii. 13. Thus Peter said to Eneas, *Jesus Christ maketh thee whole ; arise, and make thy bed ;* and he did so, Acts ix. 34. St. Paul said to the damsel possessed with an evil spirit, *I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her ;* and so he did, Acts xvi. 18. This was their constant way of working miracles, insomuch that the Jewish exorcists taking notice of it, they also called over them that had familiar spirits, in the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, *We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preaches*, Acts xix. 13. In all which it is to be observed, that Christ had no sooner spoke the word with his own mouth, or by his apostles, but the thing was done. In all which it is to be observed, that the word was no sooner out of his mouth, but the thing was done : which plainly shews, that he could do what he would, only by willing it should be done : which, as it is the proper notion of Omnipotence, so it is an undeniable argument and demonstration of his Godhead. From all which it appears, that God himself, in the holy Scriptures, hath declared, both by his words and works, that Jesus Christ is his own natural or essential Son, of the same nature and substance with himself ; and therefore whosoever would believe aright, according to his own word, must thus believe, that *Jesus is the Son of God*.

The terms being thus explained what it is to overcome the world, and how we are to believe that Jesus is the Son of God ; we are now to consider what dependence one of them hath upon the other, and so the truth of this whole proposition, that no man can overcome the world, but he who believeth Jesus to be the Son of God. But for this we need not go

from the text itself, which, being God's own word, cannot but be true ; and we shall have all the reason in the world to believe it, whether we understand the reason of it, how it comes to be so, or no. For it is not the reason of the thing, but the testimony of God, that is the true ground of our faith : and how many reasons soever may be given for it, they add no more to the ground of our believing it, than they do to the truth itself. What God saith is true, whether we know the reason of it or no ; and if we can give ten thousand reasons for it, we are still to believe it, only because God saith it : for otherwise it is not faith, but science ; and therefore all reason hath to do in this case is only to search into the grounds we have to believe that God said it : which being once supposed or proved, we must believe the thing itself only upon God's word. And we have all the reason in the world to do so, because he cannot lie ; and therefore what he saith cannot but be true : and we are bound by our reason itself to believe it, although it be above our reason, so that we cannot understand or comprehend it.

Indeed in this our corrupt and imperfect state, our understandings are so weak and dark, that we can scarce see into the reason of the least thing that is before us, much less into these great things so much above us, which God hath been pleased to reveal to us, and which need not have been revealed, if we could have known them without it. And therefore, if there be any such thing as reason in us, nothing can be so contrary to it, as not to believe the great mysteries of the Gospel, as the Divinity and Incarnation of the Son of God, although revealed by God himself, because we cannot comprehend them. For by the same reason, if it may be so called, we must believe nothing at all, at least concerning God : for we can no more comprehend his omnipresence, his omniscience, his eternity, and

other his divine perfections, than we can how three persons are in one nature, and two natures in one person. We can no more comprehend the divine nature, than we can the Trinity of Persons in it; and yet they who pretend to be the great masters of reason, have so little of that which they pretend to, as to believe one, and not the other, although they have the same reason for both, even the word of God himself; and although nothing which God hath said in his holy word be so much above our reason, as it is contrary to all reason not to believe what he hath said.

Wherefore he having said, *that no man can overcome the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God*; we need look no further for a reason why we ought to believe it, it being as certain as God is true. Yet nevertheless, it being a truth wherein all men are highly concerned, that they may be more deeply affected with it, I shall endeavour to give you a little more light into it, by setting before you, and proving these three propositions.

1 That no man can overcome the world but by Jesus Christ.

2. No man can do it by him, except he believe in him.

3. No man can believe in him for it, except he believe him to be the Son of God.

The truth of the first proposition will appear sufficiently, by shewing two things. 1st, That no man can overcome the world by himself, or his own strength. 2dly, That there is no other way to do it, but by Christ. As for the first, we need no divine revelation for it, for we cannot but be sensible of it ourselves. We find, we feel it by our own sad experience, that we have not strength enough in ourselves to withstand, much less to overcome the world; but do what we can, something or other in it will have power and dominion over us. And it is no

wonder our first parents in their best estate, in their full strength, were overcome by it. How then is it possible for any one now to overcome it? I know that many, both ancient and modern philosophers, have talked very finely of vice and virtue; but it was mere talk. Where it came to the point, they were no more able of themselves to subdue the one, and practise the other as they ought, than they were to remove mountains, and create worlds. Indeed our whole nature is corrupted, and all the powers of our souls are out of tune; and therefore our actions must needs be so, whether we see it or no. And lest we should take no notice of it ourselves, God himself hath often put us in mind of it; assuring us, *that there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not*, Eccles. vii. 20. *that the wickedness of man is great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually*, Gen. vi. 5. and, *that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. And if we cannot so much as think, how can we do any thing that is good of ourselves? And if we can do nothing at all, how can we do so great a thing, as to overcome the whole world? No; there is no way possible for us ever to do it by our own strength.

But, blessed be God, he hath found out, or rather he hath made a way for us to do it; but he hath made only one way, and that is by Jesus Christ: who hath told us with his own mouth, *Without me ye can do nothing*, John xv. 5. whereby he hath excluded all possibility of our overcoming the world, subduing sin, or doing any thing that is good without him. To the same purpose is that of the apostle, where he saith, *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Christ*, Acts iv. 12. Where, by being saved, we are not to understand, as men commonly do, only our eternal

salvation in heaven, but all things necessary in order to it; and especially our being saved from our sins, from the strength as well as from the guilt of them; which we can never be any other way but by Christ: but by him we may; this being the great end wherefore he hath done and suffered so much for us. For this purpose it was, that *the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*, 1 John iii. 8. For this purpose he *gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. For this purpose he was raised up, that he might turn *every one of us from his iniquities*, Acts iii. 26. For this purpose he was exalted with the right hand of God, that he might be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give *repentance to Israel, and remission of sins*, Acts v. 31. And for this purpose he ever liveth to make intercession for us, that he might be able to *save to the utmost all that come unto God by him*, Heb. vii. 25. And therefore we cannot doubt, but by him we may be enabled to overcome the world, and all things in it, which can any way impede our salvation by him; especially considering, that although the first Adam was overcome by it, he the second hath overcome it, both for himself and us. *Be of good cheer*, saith he, *I have overcome the world*. John xvi. 33. So that now, under his banner, we fight against a conquered enemy, and therefore need not fear being overcome, so long as we keep close to him; who hath all power given him, both in heaven and earth, and is always ready to give us as much of it as we have occasion for in any of our spiritual conflicts; insomuch, that as we can do nothing without him, there is nothing but we can do by him. As St. Paul found by experience, when he said, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13.

And as no man can overcome the world, but only

by Christ; so no man can overcome it by him, without believing in him. That the whole of our salvation, and so this, as the main part of it, depends upon our believing in Christ, is so plain to any one that reads the Gospel, that I need not insist upon it. I shall only observe in general, that in the verse before my text, St. John ascribes our victory over the world so entirely unto our faith, as if itself was the victory itself; saying, *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* That St. Paul calls faith a shield, whereby we are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, Eph. vi. 16. That St. Peter saith, *God purifies our hearts by faith,* Acts xv. 9. That when Satan had desired to have the said apostle and his brethren, Christ only prayed for him, that his faith might not fail, Luke xxii. 32. And that Christ himself saith expressly, *that we are sanctified by faith that is in him,* Acts xxvi. 18. And elsewhere he saith, *that he that believeth in him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already,* John iii. 18. And again, *I am come a light,* saith he, *into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness,* John xii. 46. And to name no more, he saith, *Abide in me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered,* John xv. 4, 5, 6. From all which it appears, that we cannot overcome either the world or the devil; we cannot be enlightened, nor purified, nor sanctified, nor enabled to do any thing that is good by Christ himself; except we believe in him, and except we believe so as to abide continually in him, as a branch doth in the vine, so as to receive nourishment and virtue from it, to bring forth fruit.

It is by faith that we are ingrafted into Christ, and made members of his body, and so partake of that holy Spirit which proceeds from him. And therefore unless we believe in him, we can derive no power or virtue at all from him, no more than as if there was none at all in him. When he was upon the earth, in his own country, it is said, *he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief*, Matt. xiii. 58. And so it is to this day. The great reason why he doth not many mighty works for us, and that we do not many mighty works by him, is merely because of unbelief: men will not believe in him, and then it is no wonder they are never the better for him, nor able to overcome the world, and come to God by him; it being as impossible to do any good without believing on him, as it is to do it without him.

But then, in the last place, no man can believe in Christ for it, except he believe him to be the Son of God, of the same nature and glory with the Father. For our believing in him for power to overcome the world, necessarily implies our believing him to be both able and willing to give it us; and by consequence we trust and depend upon him for it. But this we neither ought nor can do, except we believe him to be God. We ought not to do it, because we are commanded to *trust on the Lord with all our hearts*, and therefore on nothing else, Prov. iii. 5. Indeed, to trust on any thing besides God, is one of the greatest sins that a man can be guilty of; it is idolatry itself; it is giving that honour to a creature which is due only unto God. And yet this all are guilty of, who do not believe Christ to be God, and yet trust on him as if he was. But I think we have no great cause to fear that any, at least considering persons, should fall into that sin. For I do not see how any man that considers what he doth, can possibly believe and trust on Christ for any thing at

all, much less for his salvation, except he believe him to be the Lord God Almighty.

To make this as plain as I can: there are two things absolutely necessary to our eternal salvation, as without which we cannot be capable of it. First, that our sins, whereby we have offended Almighty God, be all pardoned. Secondly, that we overcome the world, so as to be^a and do good in it. But we can believe in Christ for neither of these things, unless we believe him to be God.

As for the first, we cannot but be all sensible, that we have often broke those holy, wise, and righteous laws, which Almighty God our Maker hath prescribed to us, and that we have thereby incurred his displeasure, and made ourselves obnoxious to the death which he at first threatened, and to all the curses that he hath denounced against those who continue not in all things which he hath commanded, to do them, Gal. iii. 10. By which means, although many, by reason of the blindness and hardness of their hearts, do not, or will not see it; yet we all stand upon the brink of the bottomless pit; and should God open our eyes, and shew us the danger we are in, we should not be able to endure ourselves, but should be ready to sink down into horror and despair. What then shall we do? Whither shall we go for succour? Shall we go to God? It is true, he is merciful, but he is just too. And besides, it is he whom we have offended, and therefore cannot in reason expect any favour at his hands, no more than the fallen angels can, without making him satisfaction; much less can we imagine that he should break his word for us. But shall we then go to Christ? If he be not God, what can he do for us? Can a creature appease the wrath, satisfy the justice, or defend us against the power, of his and our almighty Creator? No more than we can do it for ourselves. What if he spent his whole life in doing

good? It was no more than every man is bound to do. And what though he suffered a cruel death, what is that to us? If he was a mere human person, as every one of us is, both his actions and his sufferings must needs all terminate in himself; we can be no more concerned in them, than we are in the life and death of any other great and good man; much less can all mankind be said to suffer that death in him which God hath threatened: for according to this supposition, none at all were in him, he being only a single human person of himself, as every other man is. How then can any one who doth not believe him to be God, notwithstanding believe and trust on him for the pardon of his sins, and for God's reconciliation to him? No man certainly can do it, but he that can believe impossibilities, and reconcile plain contradictions; that is, no man that hath either sense or reason.

Whereas, on the other side, he who believes Christ to be God as well as man, hath all the reason in the world to believe in him for God's mercy in the pardon of all his sins: for he being God, of the same substance with the Father, and having taken upon him not any particular human person, but the human nature in general, and united it to his own divine person, whatsoever he suffered in that nature could not but have respect to all mankind, as partaking of that nature wherein he suffered; and he who suffered in it being of infinite power and glory, his sufferings could not but be of infinite value and merit, and so fully satisfactory to the divine justice for the sins of mankind in general: wherefore he is said to have *tasted death for every man*, Heb. ii. 9. and to be made a *propitiation for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 1, 2. For he, the second Adam, having suffered that death in the whole nature of man, which God had threatened to it in the first, he hath thereby taken off our obligations to undergo it;

and hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, Gal. iii. 13. And therefore he who believes him to be God as well as man, may well believe in him for pardon, to whom all the prophets give witness, *that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins*, Acts x. 43.

The same may likewise be said of grace and power to overcome the world, and do good. No man can believe in Christ for that neither, but he who believes him to be truly God ; for it is God that sanctifies us, Exod. xxxi. 13. It is God that *purifies our hearts*, Acts xv. 9. It is God that is the author of every good and perfect gift, James i. 17. It is God that makes us *perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight*, Heb. xiii. 21. It is God that worketh in us both to *will and to do of his own good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 13. In a word, it is God that is the chiefest, the only good in the world, without whom nothing can either be or do so : and therefore he who doth not believe Christ to be God, how can he believe in him for such things, which none can do but only God ; as the Scriptures plainly assert, and he himself also must believe, if he believe them to be the word of God. Such a man's faith would contradict and destroy itself, and so be no longer faith, but mere fiction and fallacy. But if we believe Christ to be God, as all men ought, and have all the reason in the world to do, then we may well believe in him for grace and virtue, every thing that is necessary to our overcoming the world, and so to our being holy here, and happy for ever. We may well believe he can give it us, if he will, because he is God : and we may as well believe he will do it if he can, because he is man, and became so on purpose to qualify himself for it ; that we who can never overcome the world without him, may be

enabled to do it by him, as I have shewn already we may.

Wherefore, to sum up the whole argument; seeing we can never overcome the world, but only by Jesus Christ; seeing we can never do it by him, unless we believe in him; and seeing we can never believe in him, unless we believe him to be the Son of God, of the same nature with the Father: therefore we may truly say with the apostle, *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

Now from the premises thus briefly laid down many very useful inferences may be drawn; I shall instance at present only in three. First, from hence we may observe the absolute necessity of believing the great article of our Christian religion, that upon which our whole religion is founded, even that Jesus Christ, the founder of it, is not only a mere man, or any other creature, but the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father. For, as it is truly declared in the profession of our faith, commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius, “Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith:” as, that “there are three Persons in the Godhead;” that “Jesus Christ is the second of these Persons,” the Son of God; and, “that he is both God and man.” “This is the catholic faith, which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved:” for he cannot overcome the world, and by consequence can do nothing in order to his salvation. Wherefore, as ever ye desire to be saved, you must be sure to continue firm and stedfast in this faith. Let not any Arians, Socinians, Turks, or Mahometans, ever seduce you from it: and if any attempt to do it, look upon them as the devil’s agents and factors, employed by him to ruin and destroy you; for so

they will certainly do, if they can ever by his help prevail upon you to deny the Godhead of Christ your Saviour, that being in effect to deny him to be your Saviour: for that none can be, but only God: and if he do not save you, I am sure nobody else can.

In the next place, we may from hence also observe what ground we have to believe that article of our church; which saith, “They also are to be had “accursed, that presume to say, that every man “shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature: for “holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name “of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.” For to this we may add from what we have now heard, that the same holy Scripture doth also declare, *that no man can overcome the world, and so be saved by Christ himself, but he who believes him to be the Son of God.* From whence it necessarily followeth, that whatsoever law or sect a man professeth, and how diligent soever he may be to frame his life according to it; yet, unless he believes this, he cannot be saved. I know some have thought this to be very hard; that they who never heard of Christ, and therefore cannot believe in him, should not be saved, how well soever they live: but the world is not governed by men’s thoughts, but by God’s will. It may seem as hard to any one that considers, that none of the apostate angels are saved. But none ever thought this to be so; why then should they think so of that? but let men think what they please, God hath said, *that no man can overcome the world, but he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God:* and therefore that must be true.

Lastly, From hence we may observe what course we must take, if we desire to overcome the world, so as to get to heaven: we must believe that Jesus

is the Son of God, of infinite power and goodness, most perfectly able and willing to do every thing for us and in us, that is any way necessary to our salvation. And therefore we must believe and trust on him for grace to repent of all our sins; for God's mercy in the pardon of them; for power to overcome the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and for such influences of his Holy Spirit, as will make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. We must heartily and constantly use the means which he hath appointed for our obtaining grace and salvation; but we must keep our faith and confidence fixed upon him, and upon him only, to make them effectual to the purposes for which he hath appointed them. If we do this, as we need not, so we ought not to doubt, but that he will so assist, conduct, and guide us through the whole course of our life, that at length we shall attain the end of our faith, even the eternal salvation of our souls, by him :

To whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

SERMON LXXXI.

FAITH IN CHRIST, OUR TITLE TO THE PRIVILEGE OF
SONSHIP.

JOHN i. 12.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.

ONE great end of the ministry that Christ hath established in his church is, to direct men unto the right way that leads to life, and to persuade them to walk in it; or, as he himself words it, *to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in him*, Acts xxvi. 18. And this we do, not in our own, but his name, by virtue of that commission, and according to those instructions, which we have received from him: for, as this apostle tells us, *we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*, 2 Cor. v. 20. And as it is only in his name we do it, so it is he alone who can make what we do effectual; and our instructions and exhortations are to no purpose, unless they be accompanied, assisted, and influenced by his Holy Spirit. Though Paul himself plant, and Apollos water, it is God only that gives the increase: wherefore in his name, and in an humble confidence of his

assistance, I shall make use of the most probable means I can think of at this time, whereby to accomplish that great and glorious end ; that all here present may, by his grace and blessing, be prevailed upon to give up themselves wholly to the service of the living God, and both to believe and live according as they are taught and required to do in the Gospel of his Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

For this purpose therefore, I humbly beseech you all, in the name of Christ, to look every one into his own breast, and consider seriously, whether you do not desire to be really happy ; to be free from care and fear, and all such turbulent and unruly passions as are apt to trouble and discompose your minds ; to be always calm, serene, and pleasant, in the midst of all the storms and tempests you meet with here below : to live continually under the particular care and conduct of that infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, that governs the world, and orders all things in it : to have the whole creation at your service, and all things in it to concur and work together for your good ; to have the almighty Creator himself your friend, your protector, your saviour, your sanctifier, your comforter, your guide, your sun, your shield, and your exceeding great reward ; to have him always smiling upon you, rejoicing over you, discovering himself well pleased with you, and manifesting his special love and favour to you ; and so to have all your desires completely satisfied in the enjoyment of him, and his perfections, which are infinitely more than you can possibly desire. This is to be happy indeed : and whatsoever else comes under that notion, is nothing else but fancy and delusion : and therefore if you desire to be truly happy, as I am confident you all do, this is the only happiness you must desire ; for whatsoever else you desire besides this, will deceive and frustrate

your expectations, and be so far from quieting and satisfying your desires, that it will but ferment and increase them.

And as this is the only happiness that we are capable of, so there is no way whereby it is possible for us ever to attain it, but only by Jesus Christ, without whom never any mortal man was, or ever can be, thus truly happy. But by him there is none here present but may be so, if we will but perform those easy conditions which he in his holy Gospel hath prescribed in order thereunto, which I shall now endeavour to explain unto you ; and, the better to excite you to the performance of them, shall likewise shew how exceeding happy they are who duly perform them, and all from the words that I have now read ; the words of Christ's own beloved disciple, who, being directed and inspired by him to write his Gospel, begins it with an assertion of his eternal Godhead, as the chief foundation of it ; for without that it would have been no gospel, no glad tidings to mankind at all. All our hopes and expectations from Christ revealed in it being grounded only upon the meritoriousness of his sufferings for us, and that upon the divinity of the Son that suffered : so that take away that, and he would be no more able to save us than we are to save ourselves. And therefore that we might be fully assured, that the person he was now to write of is able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him, the evangelist first acquaints us, that he was *in the beginning with God*, as to his person, and in his nature is God himself : that he is so far from being a mere creature, that *all creatures were made by him. and without him was not any thing made that was made*, ver. 1, 2, 3. And then he declares how this divine person, the mighty Creator of the world, was pleased to come himself into the world he had created, to be the life and light of mankind in it ; *and that he came* in a more particular manner

to his own, ver. 11. that is, the nation of the Jews, which are therefore called his own; because they were of his kindred, and more nearly related to him than the rest of mankind, they being all of the stock of Abraham, out of which he was pleased to take the nature of man, and unite it to his own divine person. And that was the reason wherefore God was pleased to choose them before all others to be his own peculiar people, because they were nearer in blood to his only-begotten Son, as man, than any other people in the world besides: and therefore it was that he took such special care of them, wrought so many miracles for them, sent his prophets among them, revealed himself and his will so plainly to them, and sent his Son to them first, who is therefore said to come unto his own. But notwithstanding the special favour that God had for them upon the aforesaid account, yet when his Son came to them, they would not receive him; *he came unto his own*, saith the apostle, *and his own received him not*: that is, they would not acknowledge him to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world; but instead of that, they derided him, they abused him, they reproached him, they spit upon him, they arraigned him, they condemned him, and at last they put him to death, as if he had been a malefactor. But then it follows, *as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God*. As many as received him, whether they were Jews or Gentiles: for though the Jews were his own, they were not his only people; all the families upon earth being his as well as they. And although he was more nearly allied to them by his birth, yet the nature he then assumed was the same that all mankind is of; and therefore all men have as much interest in him, and are as capable of being saved by him as they were. So that, as St. Paul tells us, *there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor fe-*

male ; but all are one in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 28. Or as St. John expresseth it in my text, As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.

Which words containing both the terms upon which our happiness depends, and likewise the greatness of that happiness which we may have upon those terms, I shall endeavour to give you the true sense of them, as fully and plainly as a matter of such mighty consequence requires. And for that purpose shall consider,

1. What it is to receive Christ.
2. What it is properly to be a son of God.
3. In what sense Christ gives those who receive him power to become the sons of God.
4. How great an happiness this is to them.

As for the first, the receiving of Christ is a phrase which the Holy Ghost is often pleased to use, whereby to signify all that is required on our parts, in order to our obtaining eternal salvation by Christ : and it imports our accepting of him upon such terms, and under such notions, as he is offered to us in the Gospel : wherein he is declared to be both God and man, and the Mediator between both ; and, as such, to be sent by his Father as a great Prophet, to reveal his will and pleasure to us ; as an High-priest, to make atonement and propitiation for our sins ; and as an almighty King, to rule and govern us. And when accordingly we accept of him as such, by assenting to the doctrine that he hath taught us, hoping for pardon from the sacrifice that he hath offered for us, and obeying the laws that he hath set before us ; when, I say, we do all this, then we may be truly said to receive Christ. I say, when we do all this ; for he that doth not all, doth nothing to any purpose. He that assents to the truth of Christ's doctrine, without relying upon the merits of his death, or doth either or both of them without observing his

commands, doth not wholly accept of him as he is propounded to us, and therefore can receive no benefit or advantage from him.

But this being the great thing upon which the main stress of our salvation depends, the apostle himself is pleased to explain it further thus, saying, *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.* For although, as we shall see more presently, there be something particular in these last words, which makes our receiving of Christ, and our believing in him, to be two several things in the notion; yet it is plain from hence, that in practice, all that believe in Christ, do likewise receive him; and all that receive him, do likewise believe in him: yea, so that in order to our right receiving of him, it is necessary that we first believe in his name; that is, in the first place, that we be fully persuaded in our minds of the truth and certainty of all those great things that are recorded or asserted of him in the holy Scriptures.

As that he is the only-begotten Son of God, of the same substance and glory with the Father from all eternity: that in the fulness of time he became man too, of the same nature and substance with us, so as to be both God and man in one person; that having thus taken our nature upon him, he died in it upon the cross, and so offered up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, in whose nature he died: that as he was delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification: that being thus raised from the dead, he afterwards went up into heaven, where he hath been ever since, and is there now standing at the right hand of God, far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named in heaven and earth, and vested with absolute authority and dominion over the whole creation: that he is there *exalted by the right hand of God to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and*

*forgiveness of sins; Acts v. 31. that he is therefore able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them, Heb. vii. 25. And therefore that all things relating to our salvation are now wholly in his power, and at his disposal, so that he can bestow them upon us when he pleaseth. He can save us from the dominion and tyranny of sin, and erect his kingdom of grace in our hearts. He can mortify all our lusts, and quicken us with newness of life: he can give us that repentance which is necessary to our pardon, and he can give us a pardon for all our offences, when we have so repented of them. He can reconcile God to us, and us to God, and so restore us to his love and favour again: he can protect us by his power, assist us by his grace, conduct us by his spirit, guide us by his counsel, and then receive us into glory: in short, he can do every thing for us that is necessary to make us holy and happy. As St. Paul found by experience, when he said, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me, Phil. iv. 13.**

Now he whose mind is filled with a firm belief and persuasion of these great truths, so plainly revealed in Scripture, cannot but trust and rely on Jesus Christ, as for his everlasting happiness and salvation in general, so for all and every thing required in order to it, and therefore promised together with it. And seeing it is evident, from the whole tenor of the Gospel, that no man can be saved, except he be first sanctified or made holy; that is the first and great thing we ought to believe and trust in Christ for.

And here I cannot but take notice of a very great and dangerous mistake that people generally are apt to fall into, by relying upon Christ for pardon and salvation, whether they be qualified for it or no. Howsoever they live, they hope, when they die, Christ will receive them to himself: and that is all they

hope for from him : as if Christ came to earth for no other end, but to carry men to heaven, as it was *per saltum*, without ever using the means, performing the conditions, or attaining those qualifications which are necessary in order to it. Whereas the great end of his coming into the world was to destroy the works of the devil, to save us from our sins, and purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. And therefore this is the great thing we ought to expect from him, and to depend upon him for, even such a measure of his grace and Holy Spirit, whereby we may be enabled to turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, so as to love, and fear, and serve him sincerely, and do all such good works as he hath prepared for us to walk in. And then, and not till then, we may and ought to trust on him for the pardon of our sins, we being now made such persons, and having performed those conditions, to which God for his sake hath promised it. And then we cannot fail of eternal happiness and salvation ; for that will follow in course, upon our being thus disposed and fitted for it, and received into the grace and favour of Almighty God, in which it chiefly consists. But that we may be better assured of it, the Holy Ghost himself here tells us, that *all who thus receive Christ, and believe in his name, have power given them to become the sons of God.*

But what it is properly to be the sons of God, is the next thing to be considered. And we need not go far for the understanding of it, having it explained in the words following my text ; where these sons of God are said to be *born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God ;* that is, they are the sons of God, not in a carnal but spiritual sense : not as they were born of their natural parents, but as being born again of God himself :

born, not properly begotten; for that is peculiar to Christ, who is therefore called, the only-begotten of the Father, and is never said to be born, but only begotten of him. Whereas others are said to be born of him, not by eternal generation, as Christ was, and none but he ever was, or can be, from the essence of his Father, but by spiritual regeneration, through the mighty power and efficacy of the Holy Ghost, renewing the spirit of their minds, and so infusing into them a principle of new life, whereby they become new creatures, and have the image of God enstamped again upon them, so as to be partakers of his divine nature, and holy in their capacities, as he is holy. And seeing all this is done only by the Holy Spirit of God, and seeing that Holy Spirit which doth it is truly God himself; hence they are properly said to be born of God, and to be *born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God*, 1 Pet. i. 23. and to be born of the Holy Ghost or Spirit of God, John iii. 5. which is therefore called the *Spirit of adoption*, Rom. viii. 15. because by it they are adopted into the family of God, and made his children; according to that Roman law, which the apostle, speaking of adoption, seems to have respect to, *Filios familias non solum natura, verum et adoptiones faciunt*, Hor. l. i. de adopt. Not only nature, but likewise adoptions, makes sons of families: and by the same law, they who are adopted into a family, have the same rights and privileges as if they were born in lawful wedlock, and are looked upon in the eye of the laws as children of that family. And so it is here. Although all the world be God's, he hath a peculiar people in it, which St. Paul calls *the household of God*, Eph. ii. 19. consisting of persons regenerate by his Holy Spirit, and devoted wholly to his service. And it is the particular property of this family, or household, that all the servants in it are adopted also to be children:

and so they are properly the sons of God, both by grace and adoption; by grace, as they are born again of the Spirit of God; and by adoption, as they are admitted into his household and family, to partake of all the privileges of children in it.

And all this must be ascribed wholly unto Christ: for it is he who gives this power to become the sons of God, to those who receive him; it is he that gives them that Holy Spirit, whereby they are regenerate and born of God; as we learn from the apostle, saying, *that the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, is shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ*, Tit. iii. 5, 6. And elsewhere the same apostle tells us, that God hath *predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself*, Eph. i. 5. And that, *in the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*, Gal. iv. 4, 5. Where the apostle seems again to have respect to the ancient laws and customs about adoptions, whereby a slave being adopted into a free family, was of course made free himself. So here naturally we are all slaves, and subject to all the curses in the law; but Christ being made a curse for us, hath redeemed and made us free, by adopting us into the greatest family in the world, where we enjoy *the glorious liberty of the children of God*, Rom. viii. 21.

But here we must observe the condition upon which Christ gives those who received this power or privilege to become the sons of God, even because they believe in his name; for so the words in the original plainly import, and may be thus rendered; *But as many as received him, to them, as believe in his name, he gave power to become the sons of God*. So that it is upon the account of their believing in him, that he is pleased to confer this honour upon them. And so indeed by the Gospel tenure, all our

right and title to the great blessings which Christ hath purchased for mankind, is founded upon our believing in him. It is by that our sins are pardoned, our persons justified, and our souls saved : for Christ himself saith, that *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. and *he that believeth in him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already*, ver. 18. And so particularly our being regenerate, or made the sons of God, that, as I have observed, is wrought in us, and for us, by the Spirit of God ; but that is given only to those who believe in Christ : *He that believeth on me*, saith our Saviour, *out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*. This, saith St. John, *he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive*, John vii. 38, 39. And St. Paul, speaking to the Ephesians concerning Christ, saith, *In whom; after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise*, Eph. i. 13. By all which it appears, that the Holy Spirit of God is given to none but those which believe, and to all that do so, and therefore also because they do so. Hence it is, that, as St. John expressly tells us, *whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*, 1 John v. 1. because by his believing in Jesus Christ, he receives the Spirit of God, whereby he is regenerate, and born again of him. And to the same purpose St. Paul saith, *Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ*, Gal. iii. 26. From whence it is manifest, that as we are made the children of God only by Christ, we are made so by him only upon our believing in him.

Not as if there was any such virtue or merit in our believing on him, whereby we could deserve so great a blessing at his hands, for it is still his gift ; it is he that gives those who believe in him power to become the sons of God : but because he hath made this the terms or condition on our parts, upon which

he will bestow this privilege upon us ; and certainly it is the easiest that he could ever make, we having all the reason in the world to believe and trust on him, whom we cannot but acknowledge to be both willing and able to make good whatsoever he hath said or promised : and yet if we do that, he will unite us to himself, make us members of his own mystical body, and so partakers of that Holy Spirit which proceeds from him our head ; whereby we shall be regenerate, and made the sons of God, in him and by him who is substantially and eternally so : insomuch, that, in and through him we shall have as really, though not as essentially as he hath, Almighty God himself, his Father, to be ours to ; and may as truly call him our Father, for he himself doth so, saying to Mary Magdalen, *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God*, John xx. 17

How great an happiness that is, is the next thing I promise to consider : to consider, I say, not to explain ; for that is impossible. It is impossible for the tongue of men or angels fully to explain and set forth the greatness of their happiness, who have Almighty God himself to be their Father ; which is so great, so exceeding great, that it is matter of wonder and amazement, rather than of discourse and argument. St. John himself, when inspired with the Holy Ghost, could not but admire the infinite love of God to mankind upon this account : *Behold*, saith he, *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God*, 1 John iii. 1. It is a gift worthy both of the Father and Son's bestowing ; for as the Father is here said to bestow it, so in my text the Son is said to give it : so that both the Father and the Son concur in it, yea and the Holy Ghost too ; for it is by him, as I have shewn, that it is effected : and what an happiness must that needs be, which God the Father, God

the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, are pleased jointly to confer upon us? Far greater certainly than can be expressed by any words in any language whatsoever. However, I shall endeavour to give you what light I can into it, that you may see something of it, at least so much as to make you in love with it, and long to partake of it.

First, therefore, it must needs be acknowledged to be an high honour to be so nearly related to the most high God. When Saul's servants were communing with David about his marrying the king's daughter, *What, saith David, seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?* 1 Sam. xviii. 23. So say I; seemeth it a light thing? nay, is it not the greatest honour imaginable, to be a son or daughter to the King of all kings, the supreme universal Monarch of the world? Yet this honour have all the saints, all that receive and believe in Christ. God doth not only look upon them as his people, his peculiar people, his heritage, his treasure, his jewels, and the like, but he admits them into the nearest relation that can be to himself; he adopts and makes them his own children, and often calls them by that most honourable name: most honourable, I say, as being nearest to the only fountain of all true honour in the world, as a king's children are always next in honour to himself. But why do I speak here of that which is called honour among men? which, howsoever necessary to keep up order in human societies, is not worthy to be named together with that which Almighty God is pleased to confer upon those who serve and honour him, by making and calling them his own children; which is such a title of honour, as doth not only affect their fancies, but refresheth and delighteth their very souls; it being matter of real and substantial joy to be thus highly honoured

by God himself: and therefore how happy must they needs be, who have obtained this grant from Christ, to become the sons of God?

And besides, are they become the sons of God? then they are nearly related, as to God the Father, so to God the Son too; for they have the same Father with him, and so are his brethren. And indeed he doth not disdain to call them so, in the place before quoted, saying, *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.* Where he likewise intimates the reason wherefore he calls them brethren, even because his Father is their Father too; he and they are all of one: *for which cause*, as the apostle speaks, *he is not ashamed to call them brethren*, Heb. ii. 11 only being begotten from eternity, he is the eldest Son, and therefore called *the first-born among many brethren*, Rom. viii. 29. But though they be younger, they are still the children of the same Father, and born again of the same Spirit by which he was conceived; and so are truly and properly his brethren, as he himself is pleased to own; as he well may: for it is he that makes them so, by giving them power to become the sons of the same God with himself.

Now what a mighty happiness is this? To be so nearly allied to the eternal Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, the greatest favourite in the court of heaven, the most powerful Master of requests, the only Mediator between God and men, the almighty Governor of the world, the only Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, the supreme Bishop and Pastor of our souls, the true Head of the church, the Judge of quick and dead. To have him to be our friend, yea our brother, is such an happiness, as contains all things under it that can possibly conduce to make us happy. For what can they want who have such a brother as this? who is always both able

and willing to shew them all the kindness that one brother can do another; yea, infinitely more than any but himself can shew.

And yet this is not all neither: for having God the Father, and God the Son, to be their Father and their Brother, they cannot but have God the Holy Ghost, that proceeds from both, to be always with them. It is by him they are made the sons of God, and it is by him they are preserved in that relation to him, and made sensible of it; *for the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God*, Rom. viii. 16. By which means they not only have Almighty God for their Father, but they are able to look upon him as their Father, and to call him so, having *received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*; as the apostle speaks, Rom. viii. 15. And elsewhere, *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father*, Gal. iv. 6. And hence it is, that wheresoever they are, the Holy Spirit of God is always with them, to keep them from temptations, to prevent sin, to enlighten their minds, to inform their judgments, to rectify their wills, to regulate their passions, to direct their intentions, to strengthen their resolutions, to support and comfort them in all conditions, to suggest good thoughts into them, to put them in mind of their duty, to excite and assist them in the practice of it, to help their infirmities, to lead them into all truth and goodness, and to keep them firm and stedfast in it, and so to sanctify them wholly in soul, body, and spirit, that they may not only be, but live as becomes the sons of God; which is such an happiness, that no tongue is able to express, nor heart is able to conceive, the greatness of it.

And therefore I must here crave leave to stand still and wonder; wonder, I say, at the height, the depth, the length, the breadth, of the infinite love of

God to mankind ; that he who inhabiteth eternity, whose glory the heaven of heavens is not able to contain, should receive us vile dust and ashes, his own unworthy creatures, to be his own children ; that he should send his only-begotten Son to die for us, and his own Holy Spirit to live within us ; that all the three Persons of the most blessed Trinity should thus agree and concur to make men happy. *Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him ? or the son of man, that thou so regardest him ?*

But what do I mean to begin to wonder at that now, which we can never wonder at enough ! it being so great and amazing, that should I dwell any longer upon it, my mind would be confounded, and I should not be able to proceed any farther in describing the happiness of the sons of God. But it is no great matter whether I do or no ; all that can be said more, being nothing in comparison of what hath been said already, and nothing but what necessarily proceeds from it : for to have God the Father to be our Father, God the Son to be our Brother, God the Holy Ghost to be our Sanctifier, our Director, and Comforter, is to have all, and infinitely more than we can desire. Howsoever, it may not be amiss to touch upon some of those many blessings which necessarily follow upon this relation to God ; which though they do not augment, yet they demonstrate and evidence the happiness of those who are admitted to it : as, that they have free access, upon all occasions, to the almighty Governor of the world, not as to a cruel master, a severe judge, an implacable enemy, nor as to a mere stranger, but as to a most gracious, most loving, and tender Father, who loves to see his children about him, that he may give them his blessing, and manifest his fatherly care and affection to them, by granting all the good things they desire of him. Indeed he never minds the prayers of any but his own children ; and therefore

our Saviour hath taught us to pray to him, only as to *our Father which is in heaven*; and told us, that if we pray to our *Father which is in secret*, our *Father, which seeth in secret*, will reward us openly, Matt. vi. 6, 9. Whereby he gives us to understand, that we have no ground to expect any thing from God, but only as he is our Father; but that as such we may be confident he will hear, accept, and answer our prayers for his sake: *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father*, saith he, *in my name, he will give it you*, John xvi. 23. From whence we may infallibly conclude, that the children of God can ask nothing of him, as their Father, in Christ's name, but if he knows it to be really good for them, he will certainly grant it; I say, if he knows it to be really good for them, for they may some time, through ignorance or mistake, ask that which would do them harm; and if they knew that as well as he, they would desire rather not to have it: in which case he grants their desires, by not answering their prayers: but whatsoever they ask, which he in his infinite wisdom and goodness knows will do them good, they are sure to have it.

For indeed he is so far from denying them any thing that is good for them, that he makes all things work together for their good: *We know*, saith the apostle, *that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are called according to his purpose*; as be sure all his children are, Rom. viii. 28. And they surely must needs be happy, whom all things conspire to make so; as they do for those who have the maker and governor of all things for their Father; who so orders and disposeth of all things for the benefit of his children, that whatsoever happens, they are certain one time or other to be gainers by it. There is never a shower but what produceth them some fruits; never a wind but blows them some good or other; nor the most accidental

thing that is, but what falls out well for them. The stars in their courses fight against their enemies; and whatsoever position the planets are in, the ascendant is always on their side. The malice of their enemies is really a kindness to them; and all their strivings and contentions with them, strive and contend together which should be best for them. The holy angels of heaven minister unto them, and so do the fiends of hell, though sore against their will; all their temptations tending to their increase in faith and virtue: if they are becalmed, it is to prevent their falling upon rocks or quicksands; and all the storms they meet with carry them directly to their harbour; and so every circumstance of their life helps either to do or make them good: riches enable them to be charitable to the poor; poverty makes them rich in faith; honour makes them cautious; disgrace patient; cheerfulness active; melancholy humble; health makes them useful and serviceable in their generation; sickness brings them nearer unto God; life prepares them for death; and death carries them home to their Father's house, to live with him for ever: so that whatsoever happens to them, they are always sure to be some way or other the better for it; although they themselves may not see it at present, at least not so clearly as they will when they come to heaven; where, by the light of their Father's countenance shining upon them, they will be able to look back and behold his infinite goodness and mercy in all and every one of his dealings with them through the whole course of their lives; how well it was for them that they lived in such a place, were of such a calling, had such relations or acquaintance, such an estate, such losses or troubles as they had; and that if any thing had fallen out otherwise than it did, it would have been much worse for them.

And verily it is no wonder, that all things con-

duce to the good of those who are the sons of God, upon that very account, because they are the sons of God, of him who governs and orders all things, and cannot but be supposed to have a particular care of his own children in it so as to dispose of them, and every thing relating to them, as will be most for their advantage. For which purpose, from the first moment of their new birth, he takes them into his protection; he supplies them with all things necessary both for life and godliness; he feeds them at first with milk, and afterwards with stronger meats; he settles them in such a place, where they shall have all the means of grace and salvation; he puts them out to such a calling, as he knows to be most suitable to their temper and disposition; he brings them into such relations and acquaintance, as, all things considered, will be most helpful to them; he chastiseth and corrects them when they do amiss, to make them take more heed for the future; he smiles upon them, and manifesteth his fatherly kindness to them when they stand in need of it, for their comfort and encouragement in doing well; he allows them as much of the blessings of this life, as he knows will do them good, and no more, lest they should be injured by them; he measures out the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit to them, according to their several capacities and occasions; he always keeps a strict hand over them, and takes care that they shall never have any thing that will do them hurt, nor want any thing that will do them good: and so he carries them through all the changes and chances of this mortal life, till at length he brings them to that inheritance which he hath provided for them in the other world.

I say, to that inheritance; for this is the great privilege of the sons of God, that they are all heirs; as St. Paul assures them, saying to every one of them, *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a*

son ; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ, Gal. iv. 6. And elsewhere he saith, *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God ; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*, Rom. viii. 16, 17. They are all heirs, and they are all heirs of God, and all joint-heirs with Christ ; not properly with one another ; for if they were joint or co-heirs with one another, they must share the inheritance between them, every one taking his only proportion ; whereas the inheritance of the sons of God is never divided. But though, as we shall see presently, it is very large, yet it always goes together, so that every one enjoys it wholly to himself, as much as if he was the sole heir, and none had a right or title to it but himself. They are all and every one joint-heirs with Christ, being joined with him in the full possession and enjoyment of all that he himself is heir to ; which certainly is very much, no less than all things that are : for so the apostle tells us, that *Christ is appointed heir of all things*, Heb. i. 2. and so are all the sons of God with him, and by him. All things are settled upon every one of them, as his proper inheritance, and that by their Father himself ; saying, *He that overcometh, shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son*, Rev. xxi. 7. Where we may observe he speaks in a singular number, and so not of all in general, but of every one singly by himself, to shew that every one singly shall inherit all things ; and then adds the reason of it, saying, *I will be his God, and he shall be my son. He shall be my son ;* that is the reason he is an heir : *I will be his God ;* that is the reason he inherits all things. For he that hath God to be his God, cannot but have all things, all things being made by him, and subsisting continually in him. And therefore whatsoever comfort, pleasure, or happiness any creature in the whole world can afford mankind in their most perfect state,

that every one of the sons of God doth fully, perfectly, and eternally enjoy in heaven, which is therefore called their inheritance ; because it is there that they possess and enjoy all things : and not only all things that God hath made, but himself too that made them ; even all those infinite perfections which are concentrated in his divine essence, so far as finite creatures can be made capable of enjoying them, and so are as happy as it is possible for creatures to be.

This is that which St. Paul calls, *the inheritance of the saints in light*, Col. i. 12. St. Peter, *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them*, 1 Pet. i. 4. Our blessed Saviour calls it, *the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God* ; and in a supereminent manner, *the kingdom* ; saying, *Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*, Luke xii. 32. it being such a kingdom, in comparison whereof no other place deserves to be called by that name : a kingdom, where the subjects are all kings, and every one exceeds all the princes and emperors upon earth in real wealth and honour, far more than they do the meanest and most despicable vassal : a kingdom, where there are never any wars, or rumours of wars ; no discord or emulation, no strife or contention, no disorder or confusion ; but all righteousness, and love, and joy, and peace, and happiness, as much as every one's soul can hold : a kingdom, where all enjoy every thing, and every one all things they can desire. This is that kingdom which they inherit and enjoy for ever ; to whom Christ gives power to *become the sons of God*, and which he himself will give them possession of at the last day ; saying, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, Matt. xxv. 34.

And if so, who would not be a son of God ? And

who may not, if he will? If the sons of God be all so truly and substantially happy, as I have shewn, and be sure they are both in this world and the next; what mean we to desire or seek any thing else, but to get into the number of them? Whatsoever else we seek, we are not sure to attain it; and if we attain it, we are sure to be never the better for it, nor happier by it: whereas by this means we may attain all the happiness we can desire, and more than we are able to conceive; there being no sort of happiness that mankind is capable of, but all the sons of God have it, and none but they; all others being altogether strangers to it, and ignorant of what the word *happiness* means, as having no true sense or experience of it. So that as ever we desire to know what it is to be happy, we must become the sons of God. And blessed be God for it, we are all as yet capable of being made so by Christ, who gives this power to as many as receive and believe in him. Where we see there is no exception made against any person whatsoever, nor by consequence against any of us: but as many of us as shall so receive him, as by a quick and lively faith to receive grace and virtue from him to repent and turn to God, to all such amongst us the eternal Son of God himself will give power to become, according to our capacity, like himself, the sons of God too. For which purpose it will be necessary to be constant and sincere in the use of all such means as he hath appointed, whereby to beget faith, and all other graces in us, that so we may be admitted into this glorious fraternity, the household of God, the communion of saints, the most, the only happy society we can be of.

And if there be any here present, as I hope there are many, who have already received this power from Christ, to *become the children of God*; what cause have you to praise, adore, and magnify your heavenly Father for so great a favour, so high an

honour, so inestimable a blessing as this is? How can you ever render him suitable or sufficient thanks for it? No way, certainly; that is impossible, and therefore he doth not expect it from you. All that he expects and requires is, that you live with a constant sense and acknowledgment of his mercy to you, and as becometh those who are so nearly related to himself; that you live like yourselves, the children of the most high God, and heirs apparent to the crown of glory; that you live above this world, and have your conversation in heaven, where your inheritance and estate lies; that you be patient, submissive, and thankful for every thing that befalls you, as knowing it to come from your heavenly Father; that you do not covet the little things of this world, seeing all things in the whole world are yours already; and it is not long but you will be put into the actual possession of them: that you carry yourselves *as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance; but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation*, 1 Pet. i. 14, 15. That you *be merciful as your Father is merciful, and perfect as he is perfect*, Luke vi. 36. Matt. v. 48. That you be tender of his honour, constant in his service, and observant of all his commands, and study all you can to please him; *that ye be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom shine ye as lights in the world*, Phil. ii. 15. In short, *that your light should shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*, Matt. v. 16. By this means you will carry yourselves as become the sons of God, and so continue always in his love and favour while you are upon earth; and when you go from hence, you will be admitted to that inheritance which Christ hath purchased, and is now preparing for you in the highest heavens, where you

will live with this your almighty and most merciful Father, and so be happy for ever, through the same our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: *to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.* Amen.

SERMON LXXXII.

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH IN CHRIST OUGHT TO BE
PUBLIC.

MATT. X. 32, 33.

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven : but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. .

WHEN our ever-blessed Saviour sent forth his apostles to propagate the Gospel which he had planted, he did not only give them instructions how to do it, but he forewarned them also of the troubles and difficulties they should meet with in it, and how they should carry and behave themselves under it. He told them, that he sent them *forth as sheep in the midst of wolves*, ver. 16. that they should be *delivered up to councils*, and *scourged in their synagogues* ; that they should be *brought before governors and kings*, and *be hated of all men for his name's sake*, ver. 17, 18, 22. But lest they should be discouraged, he told them withal, that they need not be solicitous or thoughtful what to say when they should be delivered up, for that the *Spirit of God* should direct them what to say, and he *should speak in them*, ver. 20. Neither should they wonder if they, his servants and disciples, should be reproached and persecuted, seeing he himself, their Lord and Master, was so before them, ver. 24, 25. He assured them, that they

should publicly preach what he taught them privately, so that his Gospel should be made known unto the world, in spite of all the opposition that could be made against it, ver. 26, 27. And therefore he bade them go on with courage and resolution, not fearing those who can *kill the body only*, but him who is *able to destroy both soul and body in hell*, ver. 28. and who doth not only uphold and govern the world in general, but orders and disposeth of every particular thing that is in it, from the greatest to the least; insomuch that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without him, and the very hairs of their heads are all numbered by him, ver. 29, 30. How much more will he take care of them whom he values more than many sparrows? ver. 31. especially while they are doing the work he sends them about, he will suffer nothing to befall them but what shall be both for his glory and their good; which that they might not doubt of, nor wonder how it should come to pass that Almighty God should have such a particular care of them more than of other people, he gives them the reason of it in my text, but expresseth it in such general terms, that it might serve as a standing rule to be observed, not only by his apostles upon that occasion, but by all his faithful people in all ages; saying to every one, *Whosoever he be that shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven:* and on the contrary, *Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

In which words our great Master hath taught us two lessons necessary for all his disciples to learn. First, how they may obtain and always continue in the special favour of God the Father, even by their confessing him before men: and, secondly, how God the Father comes to have such a special favour for them who confess him before men, even because he confesseth them before the Father.

They who know God to be the supreme Governor and Disposer of all things in the world, cannot but desire his love and favour before all things in it; because without that nothing in the world can do them good: whereas, if he who governs all things be their friend, all things else must needs be so. But how can sinful men, who have so highly provoked and incensed him against them, by not observing his commands, nor answering his end in making them, how can they ever expect that he should be reconciled to them, and become their friend? No way certainly, but by some mediator between him and them, who can appease the wrath which he hath so justly conceived against them, and so reconcile him to them. But there is but *one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all*, 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. And this Christ Jesus hath here told us what we must do for him, that he may stand our friend, and mediate between God and us. We must confess him before men; and therefore it highly concerns us to understand how we may do that, or what he means by our confessing him before men.

So far as opposites mutually illustrate each other, we may understand something of what it is to confess Christ, by its being opposed here to our denying him, and elsewhere to our being ashamed of him and his words, Mark viii. 38. For this shews, that they who deny Christ, or are ashamed of him and his words, are so far from confessing Christ, that they act just contrary to it. But to understand more fully what it is properly to confess Christ before men, we must take notice that there are three things necessarily required to it.

First, It is necessary that we heartily believe all that is revealed concerning Jesus Christ in the holy Scriptures: for it is *with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness*, before he can make confession of it with his *mouth unto salvation*, Rom. x. 10. He

therefore that would confess Christ before men, must not only not contradict or deny any thing that is recorded to be done or said by him, or of him ; but must be fully persuaded in his mind of the truth and certainty of it, as he can be of any thing in the world, so as to make no question or doubt at all of it : as, that he is the only-begotten Son of God : that he and the Father are one, so that he is over all, God blessed for ever : that in time he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, so as to become likewise really and truly man : that, as such, he lived several years upon earth, wrought many miracles, revealed many great truths, and at last died for our sins ; then rose again for our justification, and went up to heaven, and is now there the only Mediator between God and men ; and at the last day shall come to earth again, to judge both the quick and dead. These are the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, upon which our faith and hope is built ; and therefore the grand deceiver of mankind hath all along done what he could to keep men off from believing and confessing of them : especially those two, upon which the rest are grounded, the divinity of Christ, and his incarnation : the denying or confessing of which, St. John lays down as the rule whereby to distinguish between the Spirit of God and spirit of antichrist ; *Hereby, saith he, know ye the Spirit of God : Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God ; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God : and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already it is in the world,* 1 John iv. 2, 3. From whence it seems this wicked spirit began even in the apostles' days to work in the world : and that many were deceived by it, the same apostle acquaints us, saying, *Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh :*

this is a deceiver and an antichrist, 2 John, ver. 7. And as the apostles took notice of these deceivers in their days, so they foretold there would be such in future ages. As where St Peter, writing to all Christians, having first acquainted them how the true prophets were inspired and moved by the Holy Ghost, he presently adds, But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction, 2 Pet. ii. 1.

This prophecy was never more plainly fulfilled than in our days, when there are so many false teachers, which bring in such damnable heresies, that they subvert whole houses, and turn them quite off from Christ and the Gospel, owning no other Christ, but what they pretend to be within them; and so denying his birth and incarnation, his death and passion for us, his resurrection, ascension, and intercession for us at the right hand of God: and therefore have laid aside the sacraments which he hath ordained, and apostatized so far from his religion, that they do not so much as profess it, nor regard his holy Gospel so much as the extravagant writings of their own ignorant impostors. I heartily pity such among them as are led blindfold they know not whither; and hope that God, of his infinite mercy, may open their eyes before it be too late: but as for their leaders, upon them is verified what the apostle long ago foretold, *Because they received not the truth in the love of it, for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they shall believe a lie, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11*

Wherefore, in the name of Christ, I advise and beseech all here present, to carry that caution which he hath given you always in your minds; *beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves, Matt. vii. 15.* And accordingly, notwithstanding their fair speeches

and plausible pretences, as ye tender your own eternal welfare, beware of this sort of people, and all such as deny the divine inspiration of the holy Scriptures, or the divinity of our blessed Saviour, or the satisfaction he hath made for our sins: for all such plainly deny Christ before men: and he hath told them with his own mouth, that he will deny them *before his Father, which is in heaven*: and then, woe be to them! But do ye still go on, as ye have begun, *to hold fast the form of sound words?* keep close to the doctrine of the Gospel, and live with a stedfast belief of what Christ hath there revealed to you, that ye may be able to confess him before men, so as to have him to confess you before God.

But to your confessing of Christ aright, it is not enough that you thus believe all that he hath taught, but you must make open profession of it to the world: for it is *with the mouth that confession is made unto salvation*, Rom. x. 10. With the mouth, by testifying and declaring upon all occasions that Jesus Christ is your God and Saviour, the only Saviour ye have in all the world: that there is no salvation in any other, but that *he is able to save them to the utmost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25. This you must stick to and maintain with all your might, against such as have the impudence to blaspheme his name, oppose his power, or contradict the doctrine that he hath delivered to you; without ever receding from it, or so much as concealing it out of fear or favour of any man living: no, not though it should cost you all ye have, your liberty, your estates, or your very lives; which ye can never lay down with so much comfort and advantage to yourselves, as for his sake, who laid down his own life to redeem yours.

Thus it was that the apostles, first disciples, and many of the primitive Christians, confessed Christ before men; when it was death to do so. But that

was nothing to them, who chose rather to suffer the most barbarous and cruel death that the malice of men or devils could invent, rather than do any thing whereby they might seem to deny him, or their relation to him; and therefore were called his martyrs, that is, his witnesses, because they attested his divine power and glory, his infinite love to mankind, and their obligations to serve and honour him, and so gave public testimony to the truth of the whole Gospel, sealing it with their own blood. These were said to receive the crown of martyrdom: but such as suffered only the spoiling of their goods, stripes or wounds in their bodies, reproaches, imprisonment, or any sort of trouble on this side death, for the sake of Christ, they were called confessors; because they confessed him before men, by declaring and shewing publicly that they preferred his honour and love before all things in the world. And although their sufferings might seem very grievous to other people, yet to themselves they afforded matter of joy and comfort: they rejoiced *that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*, Acts v. 41 and took joyfully *the spoiling of their goods*, Heb. x. 34. And therefore they looked upon all the persecutions which they underwent for Christ's sake, not as judgments or afflictions, but as the tokens of God's special love and favour to them. *To you it is given*, saith St. Paul, in the behalf of Christ, *not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake*, Phil. i. 29.

And thus therefore it is that we are all bound to confess Christ before men upon all occasions, whensoever we be so happy as to be called to it, so as cheerfully to undergo any trouble that may befall us for it, and so give him the honour due unto his name: this being the only way whereby it is possible for us to render him our thanks and praise for his infinite love and goodness to us. And therefore confessing

and praising him, in the sacred language, is one and the same thing; for we cannot add any thing to his essential glory: all that we can do is only to confess and acknowledge publicly what great things he hath done for us. And this he is pleased to accept of, as our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for all his mercies vouchsafed to us; and to promise, that if we thus *confess him before men*, he will confess us *before his Father which is in heaven*.

But for that purpose, we must confess him not only with our lips, but in our lives, in deed as well as word; by giving up ourselves to his service; and doing the business that he hath set us, and so demonstrating to the world, that we own him for our Lord and Master. The apostle speaks of some in his days who professed *that they knew God, but in works they denied him, being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate*, Tit. i. 16. There were some then, but now there are many such, who confess Christ with their mouths, but deny him in their lives and actions; by breaking his laws, and neglecting the works that he hath required of them: whatsoever such people may pretend, Christ will never own them for his confessors. Let us hear what he himself saith: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many, saith he, will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* How confident will these men be that they had confessed Christ! But will he confess them? So far from that, that *he will profess unto them, that he never knew them*; and therefore will say unto them, *Depart from me, ye that work iniquity*, Matt. vii. 21, 22, 23. If they wrought iniquity, if they lived in sin, and the transgression of his laws, notwithstand-

ing all their outward professions, he will never own them, but reject and cast them off as hypocrites and unbelievers.

Wherefore, as ever ye desire to be in the number of those who confess Christ before men, ye must take special heed to do whatsoever he hath commanded; and therefore to do it because he hath commanded it, that so ye may acknowledge him in it. More particularly, ye must take all occasions that ye can get, of waiting upon him in his own house; to know his pleasure, and to perform your public devotions to him, and to the Father in his name. They who do not this, are so far from confessing Christ, that they rather deny him, by denying him the homage and service which they owe him; and therefore can expect no other but that he, according to his word, will deny them before his Father: whereas they who take all opportunities that they can get of attending upon him, and making their solemn addresses to him, to pray unto him for what they want, and praise him for what they have, they openly confess him before men: especially if they likewise thankfully accept of all the gracious invitations which he is pleased to make them, of feeding upon his most blessed body and blood. They who refuse so great a favour, when he is pleased to offer it to them, in effect deny him; and yet this is the case of too many among us. Though he hath so expressly commanded all to receive the sacrament of his last supper in remembrance of him, yet many that are called by his name will not do it: some out of ignorance, some out of carelessness, some out of fear; and, which one would wonder at, some out of shame, being ashamed to seem religious, or to confess Christ too much. Such may be confident that they do not confess him at all; and that, as they are ashamed of him now, he will be ashamed of them at the last day. But they who constantly celebrate the memory of that death which he

hath suffered for them, they constantly confess him before men, and therefore have his word for it, that he *will confess them before his Father which is in heaven.*

This, which our Lord and Master here requires us to do, how much soever we may suffer for doing it, may at first sight seem to be very much; but it is nothing in comparison of what he promises to them who do it. He requires only mortal and sinful men to confess him; but he promiseth that he, the holy and immortal God, will confess them. He requires them to confess him only before men upon earth, but he promiseth that he will confess them before his Father in heaven. And how great a favour that is, how happy they are who have the only-begotten Son of God to confess before the Father, is past my skill fully to describe. But that I may give you what light I can into it, such as may excite your desires and endeavours after it, will be necessary to prepare the way by premising some such considerations, as, being laid together, may make it plain and easy.

1. When our first parents fell, all mankind being then in their loins, fell together with them under the displeasure of Almighty God their Maker. They are all by nature the children of wrath, one as well as another: for they are all corrupted and depraved in all their faculties to that degree, that every imagination of the thoughts of every man's heart is only evil continually. There is none that doth good, no not one, from the first man that was made, to the last that shall be born into the world. And being all thus fallen from their first estate, wherein they were created, and so having, as much as in them lay, frustrated the end of their creation, their almighty Creator is justly offended with them, and hath condemned them all to the death which he at first threatened in that case: whereby it is come to pass, that all men, in all ages, from the beginning to the end of the

world, are continually subject to the wrath of God, and by consequence to all the misery and trouble that they are able to bear, both in this life and the next.

2. This being the case of all men by the fall of the first Adam, their almighty Creator, to shew forth his mercy and truth, was pleased immediately to set up another Adam, by whom they might rise again to their first estate, even his only-begotten Son; who taking upon him the whole nature of man, and so becoming another Adam, or man in general, he in that nature might fulfil the word, and satisfy the justice of God, by suffering the death which he had threatened to the first, and in him to all mankind; and by virtue of his said death, might be the Mediator between God and men; as he therefore hath been from the beginning, is now, and ever will be to the end of the world. And it is by means of this his mediation, that God is gracious and merciful to fallen men, though not to the fallen angels: these are all reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day, without any hopes of mercy, because they have no mediator to obtain it for them; forasmuch as Christ Jesus took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. But he being made in the likeness of men, and having given himself as a ransom for them, and being now at the right hand of God, appearing continually in his presence for them, God in him, and for his sake, hath promised to shew them all the grace and favour they can desire, and manifesteth his truth in the performance of the said promises: wherefore it is written, *Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*, John i. 17. It came by him at first, and so it doth continually, as light and heat comes from the sun: insomuch, that as without the sun in the firmament, there would be no such thing as light or heat upon the earth; so without the Sun of righteousness shining

continually in the highest heavens, the grace and truth of God had never appeared to mankind. If Christ was not always sitting at the right hand of God, as the Mediator between him and men, no man could ever have received any particular favour or mercy from him: whereas by means of that intercession, atonement, and reconciliation, which he is there continually making, by virtue of the sacrifice which he once offered upon earth, the mercies of God are over all his works, spread over the face of the whole earth; so that all men are capable of them, and may have them, if they will but apply themselves to him as their mediator for them.

3. But then we must observe, in the next place, that although Christ, by virtue of his death, be a sufficient propitiation for the sins of the whole world; yet he actually applies this his propitiation to none, but such as so apply themselves to him, by believing and trusting upon him for it. Unless we so retain him for our advocate, we have no ground to expect that he should plead our cause, and make intercession for us. He himself hath told us the contrary; where, speaking to the Father of those who believed in him, he saith, *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine*, John xvii. 9. Which he hath left upon record, to shew that he prays or intercedes with the Father only for his own flock, for such as by faith are united to him, and made real members of his body. And therefore it is written, that *he is able to save them to the utmost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25. For those who come unto God by him he is always making intercession, though for none else; but for all them, and therefore saves them all, how many soever they be. If he should intercede for all mankind, all mankind would certainly be saved; for the Father always hears him in

whatsoever he asks: according to that remarkable saying of the Father to him, *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*, Psal. ii. 8. And therefore the only reason why any are not saved by him is, because they will not believe in him for it. And he intercedes for none but those who do so; but he doth it so effectually for all them, that none of them can be lost.

These things being premised, we may easily see both in what sense Christ here saith, *that whoso confess him before men, he will confess them before his Father*; and likewise how great an encouragement this is for us all to confess him: for they who confess him so, as I have shewn we all ought to do before men, thereby plainly shew, that they firmly believe in him as their Saviour, their Mediator and Advocate, and accordingly trust and depend upon him and his mediation for all things requisite to their obtaining that eternal redemption, which they believe he hath purchased for them. But, as we have now seen, he is always making intercession for all who thus truly believe in him.

And this is that which he here intimates, by saying, *that he will confess them before his Father which is in heaven*. He will own them for his faithful disciples and servants; he will confess them to be of his body and family, that they belong to him as his purchase and inheritance, and accordingly is always making intercession with the Father for them.

And how happy are all they who have the only-begotten Son of God, to confess them before his Father, and to intercede with him in their behalf? They, upon their repentance for their former sins, are perfectly absolved from them by the merits of his death, and are accounted righteous, in and through him, before Almighty God himself: they are led by his Holy Spirit into all truth and good;

ness, and sanctified throughout in soul, body, and spirit : they need fear no evil, for he gives his angels charge over them, to keep them in all their ways : they can want nothing that is good for them, for all things work together for their good. Whatsoever they ask in his name that is really for their advantage, they are sure to have it, by virtue of that most powerful intercession that he is continually making with the Father for them. All their devotions and good works, though in themselves imperfect, are notwithstanding as acceptable and well-pleasing to God through him, as if they were as perfect as the law requires. They live under the special favour and protection of the almighty Governor of the world, and have the light of his countenance shining continually upon them. In a word, they are altogether as happy as they can wish to be in this life, and shall be eternally happy in the next ; and all because they have the eternal Son of God always confessing and acknowledging them before the Father to be his, and therefore making intercession with him that they may be saved.

Whereas on the other side, they who deny him before men ; they who deny his divine power and glory ; who deny his coming in the flesh, or his suffering for the sins of the world ; who deny his resurrection, ascension, or exaltation at the right hand of God ; they who deny him to be their Lord and Saviour, and therefore will not obey his laws, nor believe in him for pardon and salvation : all such as thus deny him before men, he himself saith, *that he will deny them before the Father* : he will not own them to be of his flock, nor take any care of them : he will deny them to belong to him, or to have any share or interest in his merits ; and therefore will not pray or intercede with the Father to have mercy on them, but leave them to his justice, to do what he pleaseth with them.

And then, what a miserable condition are these people in? They may perhaps abound in the things of this world, which God in his general providence scatters promiscuously among men of all sorts, good and bad: and they may, perhaps, dream of being happy in what they have. But, alas! it is but a mere dream: for whatsoever they have, is cursed to them. They have not so much as any one blessing in all the world; and how much soever they may flatter themselves with the hopes of God's mercy, they will never find it, in that they have none to intercede with him to be merciful unto them; for there is but *one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*: but him they deny, and therefore he denies them; as he himself here saith, and his apostle after him: *If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us*, 2 Tim. ii. 12. And woe be to them whom he denies! They are all in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. He that made them is angry with them, and ready every moment to execute his vengeance upon them: *they being without Christ, are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 12. and therefore how big soever they may look, and how busy soever they may be in the world, they are all the while *treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*, Rom. ii. 5. *when they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*, 2 Thess. i. 9. *when, as they denied him before men, he will deny them not only before the Father, but likewise before the angels of God*, Luke xii. 9. Here they were mixed with them; but then he will divide them from his sheep, and set them on his left hand before all the world; and will say unto them,

Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, Matt. xxv. 41

But those who, while they lived upon earth, had confessed him before men, as he had confessed them all along before his Father, he will at the last day *confess them also before the angels of God*, as he himself saith, Luke xii. 8. Then all the world, both angels and men, shall see the vast difference that he will make between the righteous and the wicked; between believers and infidels; between those who had confessed, and those who had denied him before men: *for these*, as he himself saith, *shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal*, Matt. xxv. 46. As they had confessed him, he will now confess them, not only before all the men that ever were in the world, but likewise before all the angels of God, who shall be all there present to behold and admire his infinite love and kindness to them: he will confess and own them for his peculiar people, his servants, his brethren: he will confess and recount all that they had done, and all that they had suffered for him, while they were upon earth: and then he will separate them from all the rest of mankind, set them by themselves at his own right hand, and will say unto them, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, Matt. xxv. 34. Where, from that time forward, they shall all *shine forth*, every one *as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father*, to all eternity, chap. xiii. 43.

For this we have the word of God himself, and therefore may well believe it. And if we all did so, how should we strive which should confess Christ most constantly in the world? And yet how few are there that do it? How few that confess him, in comparison of the many who deny him? Some deny his divine, and some his human nature. Some

deny the truth of what he said, others deny him the worship that is due unto him. There are some who were once baptized into his name, and yet afterwards renounce it, and turn Turks, Socinians, or Heathens : and some who deny his very institution of the sacrament of baptism, and therefore are so far from being Christians themselves, that they would have no such thing as a Christian in the world. And if these do not deny Christ, who can? I do not wonder, that they who forsake the light of God's word, to follow that which they fancy to be within them, should fall into such horrid opinions ; much less that they who deny one sacrament, should deny the other also, which they are not capable of receiving : but I wonder most at those, who pretend to confess and own both institutions and precepts of our blessed Saviour, and yet observe neither. How many are there among us, who never received the sacrament of his last supper in all their lives? and how can such be said to confess Christ? who can tell but they have denied him? seeing he will not do that which he hath so plainly commanded them to do in remembrance of him, and thereby to shew, that they confess him to be their Lord and Saviour. They who do not obey him in this, may be confident that they obey him in nothing, but live continually in sin, or the transgression of his laws : and they who do so, how much soever they may profess him to be their Lord and Master, in their works they deny him ; and say in effect, We will not have this man to rule over us.

I fear there may be many here present, who, at least in their lives and actions, have hitherto denied Christ, and will therefore be certainly denied by him, unless they take care to prevent it. But what must they do for that purpose? They must do as St. Peter did : when he denied Christ in the high-priest's hall, he, considering what he had done, *went*

out immediately, and wept bitterly, Matt. xxvi. 75. he repented heartily for what he had done, and spent the rest of his life in the service of Christ, and at last laid it down for his sake ; and so he never denied him any more, but confessed him to the last, though it cost him his life. So must you : ye must make it your constant business to serve and glorify him as long as ye live ; and if ye be called to it, by your death too : and then you may be sure, that, notwithstanding your former denial of him, he will reckon you among those who confess him before men, and whom he will therefore confess before his Father that is in heaven.

Wherefore, in short, as ever ye desire to find any mercy at the hands of God, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, take care to avoid whatsoever may seem to argue any mistrust or denial of him. Take heed that ye be not tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, but be ye stedfast and unmoveable in confessing his holy name and religion. Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering : let all men see that you are Christ's disciples indeed, by your adhering firmly to what he hath taught you, by your doing whatsoever he hath commanded you, by your constant attendance upon his service, and by your zeal to promote his honour and glory, whatsoever it cost you. Never fear losing any thing for him, by whom alone you can have any thing that is good for you : remember he is now in heaven, at the right hand of God ; and if you thus confess him before men, he will confess you before his Father. He will confess and acknowledge that ye appertain to him, that you are of his flock, and will therefore intercede so effectually for you, that ye shall live continually under the particular care and conduct of Almighty God the Father, and under the special grace and influence of his Holy Spirit. And at the

last day he will confess you also before all the angels of God, and advance you to that happy state, where ye shall clearly see, how all the favours ye ever received from God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost, came to you through the mediation of God the Son ; who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth one God, blessed for ever.

SERMON LXXXIII.

THE PROFESSION OF OUR FAITH IN CHRIST OUGHT TO
BE CONSTANT.

HEB. x. 23, 24.

*Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without
wavering ; (for he is faithful that promised ;) and
let us consider one another to provoke unto love and
to good works.*

THAT most glorious and almighty Being, which we worship, and call God, although he be not only infinitely above us, but of a nature quite contrary to ours ; his being purity, holiness, perfection itself ; ours weak, corrupt, and sinful ; yet so great is his love to mankind, that he himself hath found out a way, whereby we may come so near to him, as to see and enjoy him : which is so high a mystery, that human reason, in its highest perfection, could never have reached it ; neither could we ever have thought it possible, or so much as thought of it at all, if God himself had not revealed it to us in his holy word : but there we find, that *there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy¹ ghost ; and these three are one, one Lord, one God,* 1 John v. 7 That the second of these three, God the Son, or Word, was made flesh, or took upon him the whole nature of man, so as to become God and man in one person. John i. 14. That this divine Person, in that nature, lived several years upon earth, and then died for the sins

of mankind, in whose nature he did it: that in the same nature he rose again from the dead, ascended up to heaven, and is there set down at the right hand of the throne of God: and, that he is there now the Mediator between God and men, having given himself a ransom for all, to make up all differences between them, and so to reconcile both God to men, and men to God: so that by him, as a middle person between both, God is pleased to condescend so low, as to manifest himself to men, and men may ascend so high as to behold and enjoy God. All which having been typified and represented in the old law by the high-priest's going with the blood of a slain beast into the most holy place where God resided, and there making atonement and reconciliation for the sins of the people: therefore our Mediator is called also an high-priest, as doing that really and effectually, which the other did only in type and figure.

This is that great doctrine which the apostle teacheth in this chapter, and in my text shews us what use we ought to make of it. Having first shewn, that the law had only a shadow of good things to come, and that all the sacrifices which were there offered could never take away sin: he adds, that *this man*, even Christ our High-priest, *after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*, ver. 12, 14. Whereby he gives us to understand, that our High-priest, by the one oblation of himself once offered, was a complete propitiation, or hath made sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; so that we need no other sacrifice but that, whereby to obtain the remission of our sins, and to make reconciliation for us. Neither doth he only assert this, but he proves too from the nature of that covenant which our Mediator hath made with God for us, and

sealed it with his own blood; wherein God promiseth to put his laws into our hearts, and to remember our sins no more, ver. 16, 17. Now, saith the apostle, *where remission of these is, there is no offering for sin*, ver. 18. And if he had said, sacrifices are offered only for the remission of sins; but by virtue of the covenant founded in the blood of Christ once offered, our sins are no more remembered, but remitted or forgiven, and therefore there is no more occasion for any other offering for them; that one having done the business as effectually to all intents and purposes, as if it had been repeated over and over again, as often as any sin was committed.

Now the apostle having thus both explained and confirmed this doctrine to us, he proceeds to shew the uses we ought to make of it. First, saith he, *having therefore, brethren, boldness, or liberty, to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh*, ver. 19, 20. Whereby he puts us in mind, that we have now free access to God, or liberty to go to the most holy place where he resideth; that we have it only by the blood of Jesus; that this is a new and living way, which Jesus himself hath made, and that he made it through the vail, that is, his flesh. It was through the vail in the tabernacle and temple that the high-priest always went into the most holy place; for that hanging always before it, he could not possibly go any other way. This vail, saith the apostle, was the flesh of Jesus, or his human nature: and therefore when that suffered, the vail of the temple was rent in sunder, suffering, as it were, together with it, to shew that the type was now at an end, and that the true way into the most holy place of all was only by the blood of Christ. This the apostle calls a new way, in contradiction to the old typical way through

the vail; and not a dead or inanimate way like that, but a living way, Christ always living to make intercession for us.

Having therefore such a way opened, and likewise such a high-priest over the house of God, one that is made *head over all things to the church*, Eph. i. 22. let us, saith the apostle, draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; that, as he expresseth it in another place, *let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*, Heb. iv. 16. This we may and ought to do now, even to come to the throne of grace, to God's mercy-seat, with a true and sincere heart, and likewise with full assurance of faith, with such a faith as fills the soul with confidence and assurance of God's mercy and grace in Christ; especially having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, that is, cleansed from all consciousness of sin, by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon them, and having had our bodies washed with pure water in baptism, as a sign and seal of it; *Let us*, saith he, *hold the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)* and *let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works*.

I have given you this short explication of the context, both because of the great excellency and usefulness of the doctrine contained in it, and also because the text could not so well be understood without it: whereas now the meaning of it plainly appears to be this in general, that seeing we have such a Mediator and High-priest at the right hand of God, always making atonement, reconciliation, and intercession for us, by virtue of that propitiation which he hath made for the sins of the world: therefore we, first, ought to continue always firm and stedfast in our faith, and likewise in our profession of it, as grounded upon the promise of one that is

faithful: and, secondly, that we should also do all we can to excite and stir up one another to love and good works, suitable to such a profession.

First, saith he, *let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*. Instead of faith, most Greek copies read *ἐλπίδος*, *hope*; but the sense is the same: faith when it hath respect to the promises, as it hath here, being in effect the same thing with hope. Now, in order to our holding fast the profession of our faith, it is necessary that we first hold fast our faith or hope itself without wavering; for if we let that go, we shall have none that we can truly profess. And certainly we have all the reason in the world to hold fast our hope in God's mercy through Christ, seeing he himself hath both purchased it for us with his own blood, and is always making intercession in heaven for us.

This the apostle here makes the chief ground of all our hope: and so he doth, where he saith, *which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a High-priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec*, Heb. vi. 19, 20. An anchor that is fixed in firm ground, is reckoned a sure stay for the ship in all weathers; but the anchor of our soul is entered into that within the veil, into that rock that is in heaven: it is fixed there upon Christ himself, our almighty Mediator and Advocate; and therefore must needs keep the soul both sure and stedfast, whatsoever storms or tempests may beat upon it; and so it always will, so long as we hold it fast. Unless our faith fail, Christ be sure will never fail us: and therefore we must take special care to hold fast our faith, as the apostle here speaketh, without wavering or doubting; *for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed*, James i. 6. He is not like a ship, whose anchor is fixed at the

bottom of the sea, but like a wave at the top of it, that is tossed to and fro with every wind that bloweth. Such a one is unstable in all his ways : whereas he whose heart is always fixed, trusting in the Lord his Saviour, and High-priest in heaven, he is *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as he knoweth that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58.

That therefore we both may and ought to hold fast our faith or hope without wavering, there can be no doubt. The only question is, what we ought thus to believe and hope in God our Saviour for ? To that I answer, that we ought to believe and hope in him for whatsoever God hath promised in his holy word ; *for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen*, 2 Cor. i. 20. that is, in him they were all made, and in him they are all made good, to such as believe and trust in him for it. Now there is nothing that is or can be good for us, but God hath been pleased in him to promise it to us. But the sum or substance of them all is contained in that promise which the apostle here mentions, and quotes out of the prophet Jeremiah, *This is the covenant that I will make with them : After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them ; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*, Heb. x. 16, 17. Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. Where we see he promiseth two things, two such things, that if we have them, we shall, together with them, have all things that he hath promised, or can bestow upon us.

First, he here promiseth to put his laws into our hearts, and to write them in our minds. He once wrote his laws upon two tables of stone : but he here promiseth to write them upon the fleshly tables of our hearts, that if we do but look into our own hearts, we may there see, and read, and know what he would have us do. When he had written his

laws upon tables of stone, he ordered them to be put into the ark to be kept there ; but here he promiseth to put them into our minds, that every one of us may keep them there himself. So that he here promiseth to give us both a right understanding of his will, and likewise power to perform it : to fill our souls with such a sense of our duty to him, as shall incline us to fulfil it : or, in short, to give us grace to repent and turn to him, so as to walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless ; and to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

This is the first thing here promised in the new covenant made to mankind in Christ : and this therefore is the first thing which we ought to believe, and trust in him for ; *even to open our eyes, and to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God ; that we may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in him*, Acts xxvi. 18. These are his own words to St. Paul, whereby he plainly acquaints us, that we must first be turned to God, before we can receive forgiveness of sins from him : which, seeing we cannot be without him, therefore this is the first thing which we ought stedfastly to depend upon him for, in the use of those means which he hath appointed for that purpose. The want of observing this hath been the great reason why so many perish, notwithstanding the death he suffered for them : for they who profess to believe in him, usually believe (if that may be called believing) in him only for the pardon of their sins. However they live, they hope, when they come to die, God will have mercy upon them, and forgive them their sins for Christ's sake. But that is a great, a dangerous, I may truly say a damnable mistake, as being the occasion why many are damned, which otherwise might have been saved by him, if they would but have taken the right course, that

which he himself hath prescribed to them; **not only** in the words before quoted, and many other places of his holy Scriptures, but likewise in the very covenant itself which he made with the Father for them; where the first thing that God promiseth **is** to put his laws into our hearts, and to write them in our minds.

And then it follows, in the next place, *and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.* He first promised grace to know and keep his laws, and then to pardon our former transgressions of them. so as to remember them no more, but to be as perfectly reconciled to us as if we had never offended him. And if we would have the benefit of this covenant, wherein all our hopes are founded, we must carefully observe the method in which it runs: we must first believe and hope in our blessed Saviour, for such a measure of God's grace and Holy Spirit to be bestowed upon us, by means of his mediation for us, whereby we may be created in him unto good works, become new creatures, so as not only to repent of our former sins, but to live for the future according to his laws. If we hold fast our faith and hope in Christ for this, he will certainly do it for us, in the use, as I observed before, of such means as he hath ordained for it. And then we shall be duly qualified for the pardon of our sins, and may and ought to believe in him for that too according to the tenor of the foresaid covenant: not at all doubting, but that, upon our repentance and conversion unto God, by the assistance of his grace, our sins shall be all pardoned, and God reconciled to us by the merits of his death: for *him hath God exalted at his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel. and forgiveness of sins,* Acts v. 31 And therefore we may be confident, both that he alone can give either, and that he alone gives both, to the true Israel of God, even such as believe in him. But

he always gives them in the same method wherein they are promised; first, repentance, and then forgiveness of sins: and where he gives the one, he never fails to give the other too. When once a man hath left off his sins, and turned to God, he may be sure his sins are pardoned, and God is turned to him by means of Christ's intercession for him. As under the law, when a man had brought an offering for his sin, and the priest had, with the blood of it, made atonement for his sin, he never doubted but his sin was forgiven, because God had said it should be: so if we offer up ourselves as a living sacrifice unto God, and apply ourselves to our great High-priest, to make atonement for our sins with his own blood; we ought then to believe that God, according to his word, hath forgiven our sins, and must always hold fast this our faith without wavering.

Neither must we hold fast our faith only, but likewise the profession of it, without wavering. As we hope for grace and pardon only from Christ, we must profess and own to the world that we do so: we must not be ashamed to acknowledge that we can do nothing of ourselves whereby to obtain the favour of God, but that we are beholden wholly to our Saviour for it; and that we do not question, but that by him we shall have it: we must *sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. If any man ask us why we hope for mercy and salvation; we must freely tell him, it is because Christ died and rose again, and is now in heaven, making intercession for us: that we hope for nothing but from him, but that from him we hope for all things we can desire to make us happy. This we must do, as ever we expect to be saved by him: *for, as his apostle saith, with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto*

salvation, Rom. x. 10. And he himself saith, *Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven: but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven*, Matt. x. 32, 33. Whereby he hath assured us, that he will own and intercede with the Father for those only who own and confess him before men, and for none else. And therefore, as ever we desire to attain the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, we must be sure to hold fast the profession of it without wavering, as long as we live.

And verily we have all the reason in the world to do so: *for*, as the apostle here saith, *he is faithful that promised*. All our hopes of God are grounded upon the promises which he hath made us in Jesus Christ: but he who hath made those promises is faithful; so faithful, that he *cannot lie*, Tit. i. 2. and therefore cannot but do what he hath promised, if we do but that which is required on our parts, even believe that he will: and certainly we have all the reason that can be for it. If an honest man hath promised us a kindness, we take his word, not doubting but that he will do it; but we have infinitely more cause to take God's word, to believe what he hath said, and to hope for what he hath promised; and not only promised, but confirmed it too by an oath; *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who hath fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us*, Heb. vi. 18. Why therefore should ye doubt? What need ye fear? do ye fear falling into any evil? *The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil*, 2 Thess. iii. 3. Do ye fear, that, although ye are called, ye shall not be chosen? *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it*, 1 Thess. v. 24. Do ye fear temptations? *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted*

above that you are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it, 1 Cor. x. 13. Thus, whensoever any fearful or doubtful thoughts arise in your hearts, ye may and ought to suppress them all with the serious consideration of the faithfulness of God, who, for the merits and by the mediation of your Advocate in heaven, hath given you such exceeding great and precious promises, that by those ye might be partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4.

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1 Let us keep our bodies under, and bring them into subjection to our souls : let us read and hear God's holy word, that we may know what he hath either promised or required of us, and resolve to believe and act accordingly : let us pray daily to him, in the name of Christ our Saviour, for wisdom and grace, and all things necessary to our being saved by him : let us take all opportunities that we can get to receive the sacrament of his last supper, so as to partake of the great propitiation which he hath made for the sins of the world : let us be always thinking and exercising our faith on him, as always appearing in the presence of God for us : let us openly profess our dependence upon him, and our obligations to him, for all the promises that God hath made us : let us hold fast this profession of our faith without wavering, *He is faithful that promised.*

And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works. This is the next inference which the apostle here draws from Christ's continuing to execute for us the office of an High-priest, and it naturally follows upon it : for seeing we have such an High-priest, such an Advocate always making reconciliation for us in heaven, we must needs be obliged to do all we can for him upon earth : but all

that we can do for him, is only to promote his honour and glory, by continuing stedfast in the profession of his faith ourselves, and by exciting others to do so too, and to shew they do it by their love to one another, and doing the works which he hath set them: without which we cannot be truly said to hold fast the profession of our faith, nor indeed to believe in him at all; forasmuch as true faith always works by love, and produceth all manner of good works.

Hence therefore the apostle here adviseth, that we who profess the faith of Christ, being all of the same body, should not live as strangers, but should consider, observe, or take notice of one another, so as to provoke, excite, or stir up one another, not to wrath and anger, not to envy and malice, not to hatred and emulation, not to strife and contention, but to love and good works; to love one another as he hath loved us, and to do all such good works as he hath prepared for us to walk in; that our *light may so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven*, according as he hath taught us, Matt. v. 16. But that ye may better understand how this ought to be done, it will be necessary to consider what is required in order to it.

First, It is required, that when ye see a brother, any one you are acquainted with that is called a Christian; when you see such a one walking in rioting or drunkenness, chambering or wantonness, in strife or envying, or any way disorderly or unbecoming his holy profession; you must shew your love and kindness to him, by admonishing, reproofing, and rebuking him for it, and by using all means to reclaim and bring him to himself again: *Thou shalt not*, saith the law, *hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him*, Lev. xix. 17. Plainly implying that he who doth not do this, is so far from loving, that

he hates his brother. But how this ought to be done, St. Paul teacheth you, saying, *Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* Gal. vi. 1. You must do it with that calmness and sedateness of temper, and with such mild and gentle words, that he may see your Christian love and charity in it; that you do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother, 2 Thess. iii. 15. that you are sensible of your own, as well as of his infirmities, and therefore do no more to him, than what you would have him to do to you in the like case; even put you in mind of any fault he sees in you, and reprove you for it, lest you should continue in it, and so be ruined and undone for ever. Wherefore, when you have occasion to perform this duty to your brother, as you often have to one or other; as you must be sure to take the most seasonable time to do it, so ye must be sure to do it with all the tenderness and meekness as becomes a Christian, a servant of Jesus Christ, the pattern of meekness: for *the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will,* 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25, 26.

But let us hear the divine orders and directions that our great Lord and Master himself hath given us, to be carefully observed in the performance of this duty to our brother: *If thy brother, saith he, shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the*

church : but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican, Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17. Where you see it is your Saviour's will and pleasure, that if any of your brethren commit a fault, whereby you and the church may be justly offended, you must not immediately blaze it abroad, and make a noise about it in the world ; but before you tell any one else of it, you must first go to him alone, and acquaint him with what you have heard or seen, only between him and you : and if by this means you can bring him to repentance, your work is done, you have gained your brother, you have got him out of the devil's snare. But if he refuse to hearken to your admonition alone, then you must get one or two more to join with you in it, to assist you in it, and likewise to be witnesses both of your carriage to him, and his to you. But if, after all this, he still neglects to reform and amend his life, upon this your Christian admonition of him, then you must find means to acquaint the governors of the church with it, those to whom Christ hath committed the keys ; that is, the power of taking in or shutting out of the church ; that they may use their authority in admonishing, censuring, and inflicting such ecclesiastical punishments upon him, as by the blessing of God may restore him to a sound mind. But if he refuse to submit to the authority of the church, and to do what she also prescribes for his recovery ; then you must look upon him no longer as a brother, but as a heathen or publican, cut off from Christ's body, as all such rotten and incurable members should be. You have now done your duty, and are no longer bound to admonish him as a brother, but rather to shun his company ; according to the apostle's advice, saying, *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them, Rom. xvi. 17.* And again, *If any man*

obey not our word by his epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed, 2 Thess. iii. 14. But there are some, who to all outward appearance are very sober and innocent, at least so far, that none can accuse them of any gross or notorious sin; but yet, in the mean while, they live only to themselves, without any regard to their duty either to God or their neighbours, unless it be a little now and then for fashion's sake. Now, in order to your performing what is required in my text, it is necessary to consider these also, *to provoke them to love and to good works.* I suppose there are but few of you but know some such among your acquaintance, and none but may be very serviceable both to God and them, by putting them in mind, as ye have occasion, that they must not only eschew evil, but do good in the world: that it is not enough for them to avoid what God hath forbidden, but they must do also what he hath commanded, as ever they except and hope for his love and favour. And accordingly you must provoke and stir them up all ye can, to set upon the great duties of religion in good earnest; to love God above all things, and their neighbours as themselves; to make conscience of performing their daily devotions; to spend the Lord's day especially in his service; to be constant at his public worship; to frequent the sacrament of the Lord's supper; that they be careful to maintain good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate: in short, that they follow *peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord,* Heb. xii. 14. Thus St. Paul did what is here required; *If by any means, saith he, I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them,* Rom. xi. 14. And thus all Christians ought to do. And there is none of you but may, if he will, whatsoever his state and condition be in this world.

Ye have all your several relations, neighbours,

companions, and acquaintance, which you often converse with, and therefore cannot but know how they live. Now if ye perceive that they are careless and negligent of any of the great duties they owe to God or man, ye ought to put them in mind of it, and use all means ye can to persuade them to take more care of themselves, and of their future state. Ye do not know what a word spoken in season may do; it may save a soul: perhaps they may slight it at present, but God can bring it to their remembrance when he pleaseth, and fix it so firmly upon their minds, as to make it a great means of their salvation, as he often doth. Or howsoever it prove, ye have discharged your duty both to God and them, you have endeavoured to provoke them to love and good works; and whether they mind it at present or no, they will one day see cause to thank you for it, and you yourselves will receive benefit and comfort from it, especially when by the blessing of God it proves successful; (as ye have no cause to fear but it sometimes will.) For thus saith the Holy Ghost: *If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins, James v. 19, 20. And they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever, Dan. xii. 3.*

And as for such among you who make it your great care and study to serve God, as I do not doubt but some do, you also in the next place must *consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works*, by exhorting, assisting, directing, and encouraging one another in all the great duties of religion; by shewing all Christian love and brotherly kindness to each other; by often meeting, advising, and consulting together, how to improve the talents which your great Master hath put into your hands to the best advantage; how you may bring most

glory unto God, and how ye may do the most good in the place and station where he hath set you. This God takes special notice of whensoever ye do it, and sets a mighty value upon it; as appears from the prophet, saying, *Then they that feared the Lord, spake often together; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him,* Mal. iii. 16, 17. But for that purpose you must especially meet together, as oft as possibly you can, in God's house, and at his holy table, to know his will, to praise his name, to feed together upon the bread of life, and to join your forces together in praying to Almighty God with all reverence and godly fear, both for yourselves and one another, that he would give you such a measure of his grace and Holy Spirit, whereby you may be enabled to walk together in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of your life.

This is that which the apostle would have principally observed in this case, as appears from the words following my text: for having said, *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith, and let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works;* he immediately adds by way of explication, *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another.* Whereby he may plainly intimate, that the best way to hold fast the faith, and to provoke one another to love and to good works, is to keep close to the church, (as the fathers, especially the Latin, understand the words,) and to the public assemblies which are there kept for the service and worship of God; this being the great means appointed by God himself, whereby to confirm our faith, to inflame our love, and to excite

one another to all sorts of pious and good works : which it doth in a wonderful manner, whensoever it is performed as it ought, with that reverence and godly fear which is due to the special presence of the most high God. This I do not question, but many here present have found by their own experience : for although ye have sometimes gone dull and cold into the church, or assembly of the saints, have not your devotions been warmed, have not your hearts burned within you, when you have seen how attentive they are in hearkening to God's holy word read or explained to them ; how cheerfully they lift up their voices together in praising his holy name ; and how humbly they prostrate themselves upon their knees before him, in the prayers and supplications which they offer up to his divine Majesty ? Such solemn performances as these, when duly observed, cannot but of themselves very much awaken and stir you up to join heartily with them ; but much more, as being actuated and influenced, as they always are, by God's Holy Spirit moving upon them, and blessing and sanctifying them to the great ends and purposes for which he hath appointed them. Inſomuch ; that many of those also, who have come to church only out of custom, without any desire or design to serve God there, have by this means been strangely wrought upon to join as well as they could in it. As St. Paul observeth in the like case, where, speaking of the Christian assemblies, he saith, *If all prophesy, or perform their religious duties there as they ought, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all : and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest ; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth*, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. Much more they who come with pure hearts, and sincere desires, to perform their devotions to Almighty God ; they seldom or never fail

of having such a sacred fire kindled in their breasts, which will soon break forth, and provoke them to love and to good works. This many have already found; and ye would all do so, if ye would but sincerely make trial of it.

But then, on the other side, they who forsake or leave off the assembling of themselves together, they do not only sin in not performing their duty, but they expose and lay themselves open to all manner of sin and mischief in the world. They can never hold fast their faith, nor be provoked to love and good works, in that they do not use the means for it: and yet this was the manner of some, as the apostle saith, in his days; and so it is now. There are some, too many, who never made any conscience of frequenting the public worship of God; no, not upon the Lord's day, but spend that, as well as the other days, about worldly business, or else in sloth and idleness; and so live as without God in the world. But they will one day find, to their cost, there is a God that judgeth the world, and will judge them most severely for neglecting the duty and service which they owe him. But there are others, who have for some time made conscience of attending upon our solemn assemblies, and have done many things gladly, and yet afterwards have fallen off into such a coldness and indifferency in religion, that they concern themselves no longer about the duties of it, or else take up with the form instead of the power of it, and so leave off our public assemblies altogether.

I suppose there are none such here present at this time. However, to prevent your ever coming into their number, I desire you to consider what the apostle here saith, *for if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin*, ver. 26. But lest you should mistake his meaning, you must take notice, that by

sinning, he doth not mean any one particular sin, but a complication of sins, like that whereby the angels fell. St. Peter saith, *God spared not the angels that sinned*, 2 Pet. ii. 4. St. Jude, *The angels that kept not their first estate*, ver. 6. This was their sin; and this the apostle here means by sinning, when men keep not their first estate, but after they have received the knowledge of the truth, reject and apostatize again from it; that this is his meaning, appears also from his saying afterwards, *He that despised Moses' law*, not any one commandment only, but the whole law, *died without mercy*, Deut. xvii. 2, 3. Numb. xv. 30, 31. *Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?* ver. 28, 29. Where by sinning, we see he means when men fall off quite from Christ, despise him and the Holy Spirit by which he spoke and wrought so many miracles, and so are in effect guilty of that which he calls speaking against the Holy Ghost, Matt. xii. 31. which he there saith shall never be pardoned. This is that which St. John calls the *sin unto death*, 1 John v. 17. This is that falling away, which they who are guilty of, the apostle saith, *it is impossible to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*, Heb. vi. 6. And here again there is no more sacrifice for sin; there is none but that which Christ offered for any sin. This they reject, and therefore can have none at all, but must of necessity perish in their sin.

This I look upon, in short, as the plain sense of these difficult places of Scripture. From whence we may learn what a dangerous, what a desperate condition they are in; who, when they have taken upon

them the profession of the true religion, do afterwards apostatize from it, and leave off the means of grace, which are administered in it. It is true, if they ever recover themselves, it is a sign they did not quite fall away, and therefore may still find mercy. But this happens but very seldom, and therefore he had need have a care, not only of a total apostacy, but of every thing that looks like it. Keep off from it as far as ye can. Come not near the borders of it, lest you fall at last downright into it. *Be not tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive,* Eph. iv. 14. *Take heed of these false teachers among you, who privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction,* 2 Pet. ii. 1. Be not in the number of those who *will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears,* 2 Tim. iv. 3. *Mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them: for they that are such serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple,* Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Let not every slight occasion keep you from the public worship of God or the holy sacraments, lest at length ye come to slight them altogether, as some do. But hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, and consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, exciting, confirming, and building up one another in your most holy faith. In a word, strive all ye can to shine as lights in the world, to be patterns and examples to one another in your piety and devotions towards God, in your contempt of the world, in humility, in temperance, in purity, in meekness, in

patience, in justice, in charity, in all manner of Christian virtues, all the days of your life : and never cast away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward, Heb. x. 35. But be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the works of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, Mark xiii. 13. *He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

SERMON LXXXIV.

REPENTANCE THE END OF CHRIST'S COMING INTO
THE WORLD.

LUKE v. 32.

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

THE eternal Son of God having from the beginning of the world undertaken to redeem fallen man, and restore him to his first estate, with the price of his own blood; he was pleased for that purpose, when the fulness of time appointed by the Father was come, to take upon him the nature of man, by uniting it to his own divine person; that so whatsoever he should suffer in that nature, being suffered by a divine person, might be of infinite value and merit, and so a sufficient price for the redemption of all mankind. And being accordingly here upon earth *found in fashion as a man*, before he actually laid down the said price by dying in our stead, he was most graciously pleased to spend some time among men, to assure them by many signs and wonders that he was their Redeemer or Saviour; and to acquaint them with the terms or conditions upon which particular persons might partake of that redemption which he came to purchase for them: for which end, among other things, he chose out twelve men, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, to be ear and eye-witnesses of what he said and did; and likewise his apostles or messengers, to go about

and publish the same unto the world; of which number, one was named Matthew, or Levi, who was before a publican, or one of the farmers of the public revenues belonging to the crown in that place. How Christ our ever-blessed Redeemer called him, is fully described in the words before my text, with the circumstances of it; which, as they gave the occasion, so they will give great light also, to the words of my text, and therefore must be first considered.

Our Saviour, therefore, being at a sea-port town in Galilee, where there was a custom-house, he there saw a publican named Levi, or Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, or place where the customs were received by the publicans that sat there for that purpose: to him Christ directed himself, and said, *follow me*, ver. 27. The man being very rich, and busy at that time in receiving, or at least expecting money, might justly wonder to hear one whom he did not know, or whom he thought much below him, laying such a peremptory command upon him, to *follow me*; and therefore one would think he should have slighted, or taken no notice at all of what was said to him: but Christ backed his words with such divine power, as wrought effectually upon the man to observe the command, how much soever it seemed against his interest; *for he left all, rose up, and followed him*, ver. 28. Neither did he only go after him, but when he came to him, he invited him to his own house, and *made him a great feast there*, ver. 29.

Where we may observe, by the way, that the vow of poverty so much cried up in the church of Rome, and made by the monks, hath no foundation, as they pretend, in this or any other such-like places of Scripture, where any are said *to have left all, and followed Christ*. For here we see, that after St. Matthew had left all, he yet had an house of his own, and an estate, wherewith he could make a great feast. And therefore, by his leaving all, cannot be

meant that he gave up his right and title to all he had, or distributed it all among the poor ; but that he left his gainful place, and all his concerns at the custom-house, and whatsoever else would hinder him from waiting upon Christ, and observing his commands. But the estate he had justly acquired, either by inheritance or purchase, was so far from being an hindrance to him, that it gave him the happy occasion of shewing his respect to Christ, by inviting him to his house, and so giving him an opportunity of doing good to many others. For though Christ was the principal guest, and it was for his sake that the feast was made, yet there were many others invited besides him and his disciples : for it is said, *And there was a great company of publicans, and of others that sat down with them*, ver. 29. And this was that which the scribes and pharisees were so much offended at, as reckoning it a great sin to keep company, much more to sit down at the same table, with notorious sinners ; and therefore *they murmured, and said to the disciples, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?* ver. 30. which our blessed Redeemer overhearing, he gave them several reasons why he conversed with such people : first, saith he, *they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*, ver. 31. As if he had said, I go to such people, as a physician goes to his patients, not to increase, but cure their malady : I do not converse with them to encourage them in their sin, but to turn them from it. They who are in health have no need of a physician ; and if those were righteous themselves, they would have no occasion for me : but because they are ill, and out of tune, therefore I keep them company, to bring them, if I can, to a better temper. And then he adds, *Go ye and learn what that meaneth*, (in the prophet Hosea, vi. 6.) *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*, Matt. ix. 13. Though I do not blame the

custom of abstaining from the company of open sinners, that being a silent reproof of them, and the way to prevent being infected by them, and so in some cases may be pleasing to God, as the sacrifices are which he himself commanded; yet he himself saith by his prophet, that he *prefers mercy before sacrifice*: and therefore my shewing mercy to these people, by endeavouring to bring them off from their sins, is far more acceptable to God, than to shun their company, and leave them wholly to themselves.

The last reason he gives is in the words of my text; *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*. Whereby he signifies to them, that when he kept company with sinners, he was about the work he came into the world to do, and therefore was bound to do it: for he came to call such as they were to repentance; not such as were righteous already. And therefore unless he sometimes conversed with sinners, he could not have done the business he came into the world about.

These words are much to be observed, because they shew us one great end of our Saviour's coming into the world; and that too from his own mouth, who best knew it, and took this opportunity to acquaint us with it: that we may not think, that seeing he came to expiate our sins, he came likewise to give us any countenance or encouragement to continue in them; but rather that he therefore died for them, that we might live no longer in them: *for he came not to call the righteous*, but he came *to call sinners to repentance*; sinners, such as we all are: and therefore must needs be highly concerned to understand his full meaning in these words. For which purpose we shall, by his assistance, consider,

- I. Whom he means by the righteous.
- II. Whom by sinners.
- III. What by repentance.
- IV. What by his calling sinners to repentance;

and also how and why he doth it. To which few heads all that is necessary to be known from these words may be easily reduced.

The first may well be made a question ; it being made a great question, whether there were any righteous persons in the world at that time. Be sure there were none so, in a legal sense. None but Christ himself so perfectly righteous in all points, as the law required : for that hath concluded all under sin : *that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*, Rom. iii. 19. *As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one*, Rom. iii. 10. *There is not a just or righteous man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not*, Eccles. vii. 20. In which sense therefore our Saviour could not call the righteous, for there were none such to call.

But though not in a legal, yet in an evangelical sense, there were doubtless several righteous persons upon earth at that time ; such as God, according to the tenure of the new covenant, was pleased to accept of as righteous in Christ, although they were not perfectly so in themselves. Such were Zacharias and Elizabeth ; *they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*, Luke i. 6. Such was their son, John the Baptist : such was the blessed Virgin : and such was Nathaniel, of whom Christ himself gave this testimony ; *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*, John i. 47. But such as these had repented of their sins already, and therefore needed not to be called upon to begin it again.

Besides those who were truly so in the sight of God, there were many in those days who were righteous in their own eyes : such were the pharisees, or, as the word signifies, the separatists, at that time, who, together with the scribes, murmured against our Lord for eating with publicans and sinners, and

so gave him occasion to utter this divine sentence. These being mighty scrupulous and precise in observing the traditions of their fathers, and the little rites and ceremonies of their law, which were not very troublesome, or chargeable, they were esteemed very righteous, both by others and themselves too, although in the meanwhile *they neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith*, as our Saviour tells them to their faces, Matt. xxiii. 23. and therefore calls them hypocrites. But whatsoever he who knew their hearts was pleased to call them, they still looked upon themselves as holy and righteous, and despised others as wicked and sinful wretches, not fit for them to keep company with. There have been in all ages such proud self-conceited people; and never more than now among ourselves. But the condition of such people is very sad and dangerous; for they not thinking themselves to be sinners, it would be in vain to call upon them to repent: and therefore they are not in the number of those whom Christ came to call, at least in an ordinary way; for he *came to call sinners*: whereas they conceived themselves to be righteous; and therefore slighted all our Saviour said or did, more than any other people that we read of in all the Gospels.

But after all, when our Saviour saith, that *he came not to call the righteous to repentance*, he doth not determine one way or another; whether there be any righteous persons upon earth or no; that is nothing to his present purpose: for he speaks here only by way of supposition; that supposing there be any righteous in this world, he did not come to call them: for they would not need to be called, no more than *they who are whole need a physician*; as he himself speaks in the words before my text. As in that parallel place, which hath so much puzzled critics and commentators; I mean the parable of the lost sheep, where our Saviour supposeth, that *a man hath*

a hundred sheep, and that one of them being lost, he leaves the ninety and nine, to look after that; and having found it, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray, Luke xv. 4, 5, 6. Matt. xviii. 13. And then he adds, I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance, Luke xv. 7. Where he plainly speaks only by way of supposition, that in case there be a hundred persons together, and ninety-nine of these be so just or righteous that they need no repentance, but one doth need it; and if he accordingly doth repent, the holy angels are more rejoiced at him than at all the other, because he gives them fresh matter of joy, which the others do not. But still the case is the same, as to the sense and truth of the parable, whether there be or be not any such righteous persons upon earth. Our Saviour doth not say there are, or are not; he only supposeth the case, he doth not decide it; and therefore we ought not to trouble our heads about it. So here in my text, where he saith, that *he came not to call the righteous*, he speaks only upon supposition that there were such in the world, and if there were, he did not come to call them who would need it, but *he came to call sinners to repentance.*

But whom doth our Saviour here mean by sinners? What kind of people are they? They are such as are not righteous, as appears from the words themselves, where the righteous and sinners are opposed to one another; *I came not*, saith he, *to call the righteous, but sinners.* So that all are sinners that are not righteous. Wherefore, to know who they are who are here called sinners, we must first consider, who may be truly said in a Scripture sense to be righteous. And for that we need go no farther than to the place before quoted, where it is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth, that *they were both righteous before*

God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. They walked in all the commandments, that is, in all the precepts of the moral law, keeping as close as possibly they could to every one of them, so as never willingly to do any thing that was there forbidden, nor leave any thing undone that is there commanded. And *they walked also in all the ordinances of the Lord*, that is, in all such duties as God had ordained to put them in mind of their Saviour, and to exercise their faith in him for the pardon of their sins, and for God's acceptance of what they did for his sake, though it was not so perfect as the law required. Such were the sacrifices under the Old Testament, and the sacraments under the New: by this means, *they were righteous before God.* He was pleased to accept of them as such, upon the account of what his Son, in whom they believed, had done and suffered; or, which was the same thing, had promised and undertaken to do and suffer for them. And so at this time; all who sincerely endeavour to the utmost of their power to observe all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, so as not to allow or indulge themselves in any known sin, nor in the neglect of any known duty; and after all, believe in Christ, trusting and depending only upon his merits and mediation for it; such are most certainly justified before God, or accounted of as righteous in Christ, and are indeed the only righteous persons upon earth; and, by consequence, all others, how many soever they be, they are all sinners.

They are all sinners, *eo nomine*, upon that very account, because they are not righteous. For there is no medium between a righteous man and a sinner: but all mankind are either the one or the other; and so they will find at the last day, when Christ shall divide them all into two sorts, *sheep* and *goats*: there will be no third sort then found among them:

neither is there now. Every man in the world is either like a harmless sheep, or a stinking goat : he is either a righteous man, or a sinner. And seeing, as I have shewn, that none are righteous, but they who do what they can to observe all things that are commanded, either in the Law or Gospel ; they who do not so are sinners, whatsoever good works they may seem to do. For though nothing less than sincere obedience to all the laws of God can denominate a man to be righteous ; the wilful breach of any one makes him to be a sinner. This is that which St. James means, where he saith, *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*, James ii. 10. He is guilty of all ; not that he is guilty of every sin, and has broke every one of God's laws by breaking any one of them ; but he is guilty of the breach of the whole law in general : as he that breaks any one article in a covenant, breaks the whole covenant. And therefore he is liable to all the punishments which are threatened in it, they being all denounced against *every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10.

This is a thing much to be observed. For men are very apt to be mistaken in this point ; as I have often found to my grief, both in visiting the sick, and upon other occasions. If they have not been guilty of any gross sin, they presently conclude that all is well with them ; when upon enquiry I have found, they have lived in the neglect of many duties which they owe to God and their neighbour, and have been also guilty of many other sins, which not looking so black and hideous in the eyes of the world, are seldom taken notice of, although they be as dangerous and damnable as any other. And therefore, I must pray and beseech you to have a care that you do not cheat and deceive yourselves, so as to think you are not sinners, because you are not such

notorious and open sinners as some others are. For you may be as notorious and open sinners in the sight of God, as they are in the sight of men : as for example ; what if thou beest just and honest in thy dealing ? if thou beest censorious or uncharitable, thou art still a sinner. What if thou beest chaste and sober ? yet if thou beest proud, passionate, or covetous, thou art still a sinner. What if thou lovest thy friends ? unless thou lovest thy enemies too, thou art still a sinner. What if thou lovest God above some things ? unless thou lovest him above all things, thou art still a sinner. What if thou never swearest ? yet if thou beest a liar, thou art still a sinner. What if thou readest God's holy word, and hearest sermons ? unless thou prayest also, and receivest the holy sacrament, thou art still a sinner. And what if thou doest hurt to none ? unless thou doest all the good thou canst, thou art still a sinner : the one being as much commanded, as the other is forbidden. Thus I might run through all duties and vices whatsoever. If a man perform ever so many duties, if there be any which he doth not perform ; or if he avoid ever so many sins, if there be any he doth not avoid ; he is still a sinner for all that, and therefore in the number of those which our Saviour calleth to repentance.

What that is, is the next thing to be considered. And it had need to be considered well, forasmuch as our eternal welfare depends upon it ; and yet nothing is more common than to be deceived about it. There are but few that ever put the question to themselves, whether they have repented or no : such may conclude, without any more ado, that they have not. And they who do consider it, are apt to flatter themselves with the thoughts that they have repented, when they have no ground at all to think so. If they do but acknowledge their sins, and are sorry now and then for them, they presently think that this is

repenting of them. Especially, if they do but leave off some of the most scandalous vices they were formerly addicted to, they look upon themselves as true penitents; although they still retain many of their former sins; or, perhaps, take up others as bad or worse than any of those which they left off. As, when a prodigal becomes covetous; when a publican becomes a pharisee; when a profane derider of religion becomes a sceptic or hypocrite in it. As in the church of Rome, when they who have led wicked and lewd lives for many years together, enter themselves into any of their religious orders, as they call them, this is styled conversion, and from that time forward they are reckoned in the number of their religious. And so among ourselves; when such people join themselves to any sect or separate congregation, which are much of the same nature, then they are esteemed converts, and think themselves as holy and religious as the best. They are conscious to themselves that they ought not to be such as they were before, and if they do but become any thing else, whatsoever it be, they please themselves with the thoughts that they have repented of their sins, and are become new creatures; when, after all, this is but turning from one sin to another, and often from that which is less to one that is more dangerous; as filling their minds with a conceit that they have repented already, and therefore need not take any more care about it. And, by consequence, living and dying without it, will repent eternally in the other world, that they never truly repented in this.

But what then doth our Saviour here mean by repentance; that repentance to which he calleth sinners? He means such an hearty sorrow and contrition for sins past, as puts a man for the future upon stedfast resolutions, and sincere endeavours, to suppress, avoid, and abhor all manner of sin; not only because of the ill effects it will have upon him-

self, but because it is sin, or a transgression of God's law, and an offence to his divine Majesty. And therefore, such a one doth not only forsake some, but all sins, to the utmost of his power; and that too, not only so as not to commit them any more, but so as not to have any love or affection for them. Neither doth he only forsake the sins he was wont to commit, but he performs all such duties as he was wont to neglect. That this is the true notion of repentance in this place, appears from the word which our Lord here useth, *μετένοιον*, which signifies the changing, not of a man's life or manners only, but of his mind, when that is wholly taken off from sin, and fixed upon God, and set to obey his commandments; whereby he is quite changed from what he was, and therefore is called a new man and a new creature; because *old things are passed away, and all things are become new* in him, 2 Cor. v. 17.

Thus, in the parable of the prodigal son, our Saviour describes his repentance by his coming to himself, Luke xv. 17. implying, that before the young man had been besides himself, but now *he came to himself*, to his right mind again: and so, of a prodigal, became a most dutiful and obedient son, wholly another man than what he had been before. The same may be observed of Zaccheus; what a wonderful change was wrought in him so soon as Christ had called him to repentance? He being a publican, and one of the chief of them, had been given up to cheating, oppressing, and extorting money from people, by laying several things falsely to their charge. But Christ was no sooner come into his house, but he, being heartily penitent for his former wicked life, stands up, and saith, *Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold*, Luke xix. 8. Thus it was also with St. Paul, when Christ had called him, as he did with his

own mouth, to repentance. What one man can be imagined more different from another, than he was from his former self? He before had persecuted, and now preached the faith of Christ. He was wont to go from city to city to suppress it, and now he travels from country to country to propagate and establish it, and of the greatest sinner became one of the greatest saints that ever lived. But I needed not have gone so far from my text for instances of this nature: for here we find that Christ had no sooner called Levi, saying to him, *Follow me*; but immediately he left all, and followed him: he left the whole course of life that he had before led, and gave up himself entirely to the service of Christ: so that he spent his whole life afterwards in preaching, and then laid it down in defence of the Gospel. This was true repentance indeed; and therefore it is such as this which Christ calls sinners to.

What our Lord means by his *calling sinners to repentance*, is the next question to be resolved. And it will be easy to do it now we understand the terms, whom he means by sinners, and what by repentance. For his calling them to it in general, is nothing else but his advising, exhorting, requiring, commanding, or persuading them to do it; as here he called Levi, by saying to him, *Follow me*; who therefore presently did so: and so he calls upon all sinners, all that have lived in any sin or sins: he calls upon them to leave their sins, and to follow him, by walking in his holy steps, and observing all things whatsoever he hath commanded them. This is properly his calling them to repentance. But that we may both better understand, and be more ready to hearken to his call, I shall, by his assistance, consider two things concerning it.

1. Why he calls sinners to repentance.

2. How, or by what means, he doth it.

He that considers Christ's infinite glory and power,

as he is the eternal Son of God, of the same nature with the Father, may justly wonder why he should concern himself so much about sinful mortals upon earth, as to call them to repentance : they being all but a company of ungrateful rebels against his divine Majesty ; which he may justly crush into nothing, or condemn to the infernal pit when he pleaseth. *The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation by rebelling against him, them he hath reserved in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day,* Jude 6. never vouchsafing to call any one of them so much as once to repentance, but suffering them all to go on in their sins, and continue in that forlorn condition they have brought themselves into, without taking any notice of them, but only to torment and punish them. And yet they are his creatures as well as men are. Why then should he take any more care of man than he doth of them ? And besides, what advantage can he get by the conversion of sinful men ? Wherein is he better or worse, whether they repent or no ? No way, certainly. It is all one to him and his essential glory, whether they be good or bad, happy or miserable. He is not the less happy, because they are miserable ; nor the more, because they are happy. His happiness is always like himself, infinite, and therefore not capable of being increased or diminished by any thing that men, or any creatures in the world, can do. And yet notwithstanding, we find him all along very earnest with sinful men to repent ; yea, as he himself here saith. he came on purpose to call them to it.

This is a great astonishing mystery, so far above our reach, that we should never have so much as thought on it, if he himself had not revealed it to us in his holy word : where we find, that this all-glorious and almighty Person, upon the fall of mankind in their first parents, was pleased of his infinite goodness to undertake their redemption, by suffering in

their nature the death they had deserved, and by that means mediating or interceding so effectually between God and them, that they may be restored to their first estate, upon the most easy terms that could be imagined, even upon their repentance and faith in him. And therefore, after he appeared publicly in the world, the first thing he said to mankind was, *Repent, and believe the Gospel*, Mark i. 15. implying, that if they did these two things, they might be saved by him, otherwise not. Where we may likewise observe, that he puts repenting before believing, as being the first thing required, in order to our obtaining eternal redemption by him; and that without which it would avail us nothing to believe, if we could possibly do it. But indeed, the thing is impossible; it is impossible to believe in a Gospel-sense, without such repenting as is there required. As for example: no man can believe in Christ for the pardon of his sins, but according to the promises which he hath made to that purpose; his promises being the only ground we have to build our faith upon. But all the promises that he hath made for the pardon of our sins, are still made with this proviso or condition, that we repent of them. As, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*, Isa. lv 7. *Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin*, Ezek. xviii. 30. *Repent, and be converted*, saith St. Peter, *that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord*, Acts iii. 19. And so all along, both in the Old and New Testament, God hath promised to pardon our sins, if we do repent; but there is not one promise in all the Bible, that God will pardon any man's sins, unless he first repent of them.

Wherefore seeing no man hath any ground to believe in Christ for the pardon of his sins, but only

his promise to do it; and seeing he hath no where promised that he will pardon any man's sins, unless he repent: hence it necessarily followeth, that no man, who doth not first repent, can truly believe in Christ for the pardon of his sins; for he hath no ground for such a faith. And therefore if any one fancies or presumeth, notwithstanding his impenitence, that he doth believe, it is not faith properly so called, but mere presumption and fancy; especially considering, that as God hath no where promised pardon and salvation to any, but those who do repent; so he hath threatened ruin and destruction to all that do not: and that too with his own mouth, saying, *I tell you, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 3. which he that came into the world on purpose to save us, would never certainly have said, if it had been possible for us to be saved without repenting. And therefore we may well conclude, and lay it down as a most undoubted truth, that although repentance hath nothing in it of merit or condignity, yet it is so absolutely required of God in order to it, and so necessary to qualify us for pardon and salvation, that no man ever yet was, or ever can be, pardoned and saved without it.

From hence therefore we may easily see into the reason why Christ calls sinners to repentance: for seeing he came into the world on purpose to save sinners, and yet none can be saved except they repent; unless he called men to repentance, he could not bring them to salvation, and so his labour would have been all lost; and the great work he undertook for us would have fallen to the ground, and come to nothing; whereas, by calling sinners to repentance, he doth the work he came into the world about: for upon their repentance, he saves them from their sins, procures their pardon, and restores them to the love and favour of Almighty God; and so at last, by the virtue of his merits and mediation for them, he brings them to eternal life and glory: and therefore this

was one great end of his coming into the world ; as he himself here saith, *I came to call sinners to repentance*. And this was the great reason why he called them to it ; even that his blood might not be spilt in vain, but that men, repenting of their sins, might be washed in it, and so presented to God without spot or blemish.

But then the next question is, how or by what means he doth this : in answer to which, we may first observe in general, that he hath many, infinitely more ways than we know of, whereby to bring people off from their sins, and turn them to God. For as he is the head of all things to the church, he orders all things so as to make them conduce one way or other to this end, if men would but take notice of it. As all things work together for good to them who love God ; so all things work together to make men love God, if they could but see it. All the mercies he bestows, and all the judgments he lays upon them, are for this end : as the apostle saith, *Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ?* Rom. ii. 4. This is a thing he would have all men know and mind, that every act of love and goodness which God is pleased to shew any man, is designed not to drive or force, but to lead him to repentance, to work upon him suitably to his nature, as he is a reasonable creature, capable of discerning between good and evil, and of choosing the one before the other : and as all the blessings he bestows, so all the judgments he inflicts, are in order to the same end. For, as the apostle observes, *he chasteneth us, not for his own pleasure, but for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness*, Heb. xii. 10. that we might repent, and turn to God, and so be made holy, as he who hath called us is holy, in all manner of conversation.

But our blessed Redeemer speaking in my text

not of the other methods whereby he brings them, but only of his calling sinners to repentance; I shall insist at present only upon that, as the ordinary means whereby he doth it; and consider how he always hath, still doth, and ever will call them to it. For he having from the beginning of the world undertaken the redemption of fallen man, hath in all ages inspired some men with his own holy Spirit, to call upon others, in his name, to repent, and observe the laws of God. For that it was his Spirit that spake all along in the prophets, we are fully assured by the same Spirit speaking in St. Peter, and saying, that the prophets prophesied of the grace of God, *searching what, and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*, 1 Pet. i. 11. From whence it is manifest, that it was the Spirit of Christ that was in the prophets: it was by that they prophesied, and called upon men to repent; and therefore it was he that did it all along by his Spirit in them. It was by his Spirit that Noah was not only just and righteous himself; but, as St. Peter saith, he was a *preacher of righteousness*, 2 Pet. ii. 5. So that Christ, by his holy Spirit in Noah, preached to the people of that age, calling upon them to repent of their sins, and work righteousness, so as to become such as he was, righteous before God.

This will give us great light into that obscure passage of the same apostle, where he saith, that *Christ hath also suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison; which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved*, 1 Pet. iii. 18, 19, 20. The question is, in what sense

Christ is here said to go and preach to the spirits in prison : for the understanding whereof, we must observe three things.

1. As the souls which are in heaven are called *the spirits of just men made perfect*. Heb. xii. 23. so they which are in hell, are here called *the spirits that are in prison, being delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment* ; as this same apostle speaks of the apostate angels, 2 Pet. ii. 4.

2. We must observe that he here speaks only of those who were disobedient in the days of Noah.

3. That he saith, Christ went and preached to them (not in his own person, but) by his Spirit. Now, that he did so in a literal sense, is plain from what I before observed out of the same apostle, who is the best interpreter of his own words : for seeing Noah was a preacher of righteousness ; and seeing the Spirit of Christ was in him, as being a prophet, and one sent to preach the word of God ; and seeing they would not hearken to his preaching, they were cast into the infernal pit, or prison, where they have been ever since, and will be for ever. Therefore it may be truly and properly said, that Christ, by his Spirit, went and preached to the spirits in prison, or which were in prison in St. Peter's time ; for so all then were, to whom Noah by the Spirit of Christ preached, except the seven that were saved with him in the ark.

And as it was in the days of Noah, so it was in all ages, both before and since ; Christ still caused some or other, and moved them by his Spirit, to call upon men to repent, and turn to God. This he did by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the patriarchs ; by Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, David, and all the prophets : their great business was, not only to foretel things to come, but to tell men of their sins, and call them to repentance : as, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts,*

and let him return unto the Lord, saith the prophet Isaiah, chap. lv. 7. Return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good, saith the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xviii. 11. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, saith the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xviii. 30. Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, saith the prophet Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, chap. iv. 27. Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, saith the prophet Joel, chap. ii. 13. And thus all along in the Old Testament, Christ was always calling sinners to repentance by his holy Spirit in the prophets, before he came himself into the world.

And when the fulness of time was near expired, that he himself was publicly to appear among men in their own nature, he sent John the Baptist before, to prepare the way for him, by preaching the same doctrine, and saying, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, Matt. iii. 2. This was the sum and substance of all he preached; and by this he prepared the way so effectually for Christ, that he no sooner appeared, but many were rightly disposed, and ready to receive him: for which end he himself also, so soon as he was baptized, and had, after his fasting forty days, overcome the devil, and then set about the great work he came about, having heard that John was cast into prison, the first thing he did was to *call sinners to repentance*, in the very same words that his forerunner had done. For St. Matthew, having described his baptism, and his fasting in the wilderness, and John's imprisonment, saith, *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, Matt. iv. 17. To the same purpose St. Mark saith, *that after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is*

fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel, Mark i. 14, 15. And as this was the first, so it was the great doctrine he insisted on all along. Neither did he only do it himself wheresoever he was, but he sent out his twelve apostles also to preach the same doctrine in other places: for they having received their orders and commission from him, it is said, *they went out, and preached that men should repent*, Mark vi. 12. So that all the while, from the time of his appearing publicly in the world, to his going out of it again, he was doing the work he came about, even *calling sinners to repentance* with his own mouth; and for a great while by his apostles, whom he sent out for that purpose: and what great effect his calling had upon those who heard it, appears from the multitudes that were converted by it; for although John the Baptist had very many, yet it is said, *that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John*, John iv. 1.

And as our blessed Saviour thus called sinners to repentance while he lived; so after he was dead, and risen again, he ordered the same still to be done in his name: for appearing to his apostles after his resurrection, he said unto them, among other things, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*, Luke xxiv. 47. And that his apostles might have power to do it, he immediately before his ascension into heaven gave them full commission, saying, *Go ye therefore, and teach, or make all nations my disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Where we may observe, that as he commands and empowers his apostles to preach to all nations to repent, and turn to him, that they might become his disciples, and keep his laws;

so he promiseth, that he himself would be always with them in the doing it: and not only with them who were then in being, but with their successors to the end of the world. And therefore whensoever any, by virtue of this commission, call sinners to repentance, he, being present with them, is the principal agent in it: it is he that doth it by them; otherwise their doing it, though in his name, and by his authority, would signify nothing; whereas he himself being always present, and influencing what they did by his own almighty power, we know what glorious success they have had in persuading whole nations to repent and submit to him.

In obedience therefore to the command, and confidence in the promise, which Christ had given them, the apostles went about the world, preaching repentance in his name: *Repent, saith St. Peter, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ*, Acts ii. 38. And again, *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*, Acts iii. 19. And when Christ had called Saul with his own mouth, he presently went forth, and shewed both to the Jews and Gentiles, that *they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance*, Acts xxvi. 20.

By these, with the rest of the apostles, and others, whom Christ sent out for that purpose, his faith was soon planted in most parts of the known world: because whithersoever they went, he still went along with them; and made use of them only as his instruments, whereby *to call sinners to repentance*. It was still he himself that did it.

So it hath been all along; and so it is at this day: we who have the honour to be admitted into so much of the apostolical office, as to preach Christ's word unto you, we do not do it in our own name, but his; neither are we any more than instruments in his hand: it is he who calls you to repentance by us.

For, as the apostle saith, *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*, 2 Cor. v. 20. And therefore, when we come unto you in Christ's name, and preach his word, you must *receive it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. and always remember what our great Master said to his apostles, and in them to such as should succeed them in preaching his word, *He that heareth you, heareth me ; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me*, Luke x. 16. From whence it is plain, that Christ himself speaks by us ; and therefore you had need have a care how you hear. For when we call upon you to perform any duty, it is Christ himself that requires you to do it. When we preach repentance to you, it is he that calls you to it : this being the ordinary means settled in his church, whereby he always did, and still doth, call sinners to repentance.

And if so, what a sad account will many here present have to give to him at the last day ? How often hath he called upon you to repent, and yet you will not do it ? How often hath he used me, the unworthiest of all his ministers, to advise you, to pray you in his stead, to beseech you, to require you in his name to be constant in the use of those means which he hath appointed for your obtaining grace and salvation by him ? And yet (I speak it with grief and sorrow of heart) there are but very few will be persuaded to it : insomuch, that we have just cause to fear, that those very means which Christ designed for your salvation, will prove to many (I dread to speak it !) the means of their greater damnation. Howsoever, I must do my duty, and leave the issue to him that sent me.

In his name therefore I pray and beseech ; or rather not I, but Jesus Christ himself ; Jesus Christ,

your only Mediator and Redeemer; Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who loved you, and gave himself for you; Jesus Christ, who came into the world on purpose to save sinners; he calls upon all sinners, particularly those who are here present, he calls upon them all to repent; all that have hitherto lived in any, either open or secret sin; all that have lived in the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, or the pride of life; all that have lived in ignorance or infidelity, in gluttony or drunkenness, or in any sort of debauchery and profaneness; all that have lived in schisms or heresy, in faction, sedition, or rebellion against their lawful governors in church or state; all that have lived in envy, hatred, or malice against their neighbours; all that have lived in theft or robbery, in oppression or extortion, in covetousness, cheating, or defrauding others, without making them full restitution; all that have lived in sloth and idleness, spending their time in vain, and to no purpose; all that have lived in undutifulness to their parents, uncharitableness to the poor, or in censoriousness, backbiting, and speaking evil of their brethren; all that have lived in swearing, lying, perjury, or taking God's holy name any way in vain; all that have lived in the profanation of the Lord's day, doing their own work, and not the duties required on it; all that have lived in superstition or idolatry, worshipping any other than the true God, or not worshipping him as they ought; all that have lived in the love, desire, trust, or fear of any thing in the world, more than of him that made or governs it; all that have lived in the neglect of their public or private devotions to him, and so as without God in the world; all that have lived without the pale of Christ's church, by not being baptized into it, according to his institution: all that have lived in the neglect of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, not receiving it at all, or at least seldom or never, when

they can find any thing else to do; all that have lived in presumption, or unbelief, in the contempt of God's threatenings, or in the despair of the mercy which he hath promised in the Gospel; these, and if there be any other sort of sinners among you, Jesus Christ now calls them all to repentance: he now calls upon all and every one to leave off your sins; to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; to do unto others, as ye would have others do to you; to love the Lord your God with all your hearts, and your neighbours as yourselves: to live as those who are none of your own, but are bought with a price, and therefore to glorify God both in your body and in your spirit, which are his: in short, he calls upon you to believe whatsoever he hath taught, to rely upon whatsoever he hath promised, and to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded you.

Now seeing Christ hath thus called you all to repentance, let me advise you in his name to do it; and to do it now, as not knowing whether he will ever call you any more. There is none in the world can save you but he; and he will never do it, except ye repent: and that is the reason why he calls upon you to do it. And if ye will not hearken to his call, hearken I pray you to what he will say to you; *Because I called, and ye refused; I have stretched forth my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you;* as it most certainly will ere long, Prov. i. 24—27 Whereas, if ye will hearken to his call, so as to repent and turn to God, I assure you in his name, that he will receive you into his care and protection; he will wash you from your sins with his own blood; he will

assist, direct, and bless you while you live, and then give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in him :

To whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

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SERMON LXXXV.

REPENTANCE A CERTAIN AND THE ONLY METHOD OF
OBTAINING PARDON.

ISAIAH lv. 7.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

ALTHOUGH there be nothing in the world that men are generally addicted to so much as sin; yet there is nothing which they have, or can have, more real cause to detest and hate, than it; it being that which hath deprived them of the highest happiness, and plunged them into the deepest misery that any creature is capable of. For whereas nothing could be more pure and perfect, nothing more holy and happy, than man was when he first came out of his Creator's hands, sin hath now so depraved all the faculties of his soul, so distempered all the members of his body, and so deformed the whole man, that now nothing can be more loathsome and hideous, nothing more wretched and miserable, than he; and by consequence, that every one of us by nature is. For if we take a serious survey of ourselves, we may easily discover how sin hath so blinded our minds, corrupted our judgments, distracted our thoughts, perverted our wills, disordered our affections, and so debauched all our words and actions, that it hath

incensed God against us, and brought all the curses of his law and the effects of his displeasure upon us ; whereby we who were designed for the most happy, are become the most miserable creatures upon earth, subject continually not only to pains and aches in our bodies, cares and fears in our minds, and to grief and trouble in our hearts ; but even to the wrath of God, to horror of conscience, and to all the tortures and torments that either our soul or body is able to undergo.

This therefore is the sad and miserable condition that sin hath brought us all into ; neither is there any other way imaginable, whereby any of us can be freed from this our misery, unless sin, which is the cause of it, be first taken away : for so long as we continue guilty of sin, we are still obnoxious to all the punishments which it doth deserve. *But if our transgressions be forgiven, and our sins covered,* we cannot but be blessed, because God himself hath said we are so. Psal. xxxii. 1. And therefore it must needs be our wisdom to study all arts and means that we can possibly find out, to get our sins pardoned, and so our obligations to misery and punishment disannulled. For this end therefore, it will be necessary to consult the word of God, to understand what he would have us do in order to so great an end : for seeing none can pardon our sins but he against whom they are committed, none but he can tell us upon what account he will pardon them.

And verily, all circumstances considered, it is one of the greatest mysteries in the world, that God should pardon our sins upon any account at all ; neither could we in reason have expected it, if he had not promised it to us. For I wonder upon what account we should think, that the great Creator of the world should put up those injuries, that we silly worms, that live upon him, have presumed to commit against him. Alas ! he is never the better for all our services, nor the worse for all our sins ; and

therefore, what need he concern himself about us, so as to promise us pardon and acceptance upon any account whatsoever? The devils, or fallen angels, were once as glorious creatures as man ever was: but them God hath passed by, and hath taken no more notice of them, than if they had not been his creatures; but still suffers them to languish in their sins, yea hath condemned them to eternal torments, without any hope of mercy, or promise of pardon, however for the future they shall carry and behave themselves. And how can we expect, that he should have any more regard to us, than he hath had to them? They are his creatures as well as we, and our sins have deserved as much as theirs. What ground therefore can we have to look for pardon more than they? Questionless, if we look upon ourselves only, they are every whit as worthy of mercy as we either are, or can be. But only God of his infinite goodness towards us particularly, for which we can give no reason but his own good pleasure, hath been pleased to have pity and compassion upon us, though not on them; and that upon such easy and reasonable terms, that we could never in reason have desired better: for what doth he say? only, *Let the wicked forsake his way, &c.*

These words therefore containing the terms or conditions to be performed by us, in reference to the pardon of our sins, and by consequence to our eternal happiness, it is your interest to understand, and my duty to explain, the full meaning of them to you. Now whatsoever is necessary to be known from these words, may be reduced to these heads.

I. Who is the wicked and unrighteous man here spoken of.

II. How he should forsake his ways and thoughts.

III. How turn again unto the Lord.

IV. What encouragement he hath to do so. Or,

how God will be merciful unto him, and multiply his pardons.

1. Who is the wicked or unrighteous man here spoken of? A question easy to be resolved. For we need not go far to find out such a man. There are too many of them, I fear, amongst us at this very time. Nay, there is never a one amongst us but hath cause to suspect himself to be the man. And therefore when God in Scripture, or I from him, speak of wicked and unrighteous men. do not you shuffle it off from yourselves, and think that you are not concerned, but rather suspect yourselves to be the persons. As when our Saviour said, that one of his apostles should betray him, every one presently cried out, *Lord, is it I?* So when we speak of wicked and unrighteous men, every one should say within himself, Am not I the man now spoken of? When God saith, *Let the wicked forsake his way*, doth he not mean me? or rather every one of you, being conscious to himself of his own sins, should make no question of it, but conclude himself to be the man whom God here calls upon. And let me tell you, every person amongst you that doth not thus apply what is said to himself, had as good be out of the church as in it; it being impossible that you should receive any benefit from what you hear, if you think not yourselves concerned in it: for what will it signify for me to tell you, that you must forsake your sins, unless you believe that you have some sins which you must forsake? or to speak of pardon to them, that think they need it not, though others do? It is this general hearing of sermons that makes them so ineffectual, and is, and hath been, the ruin of millions of souls. But to prevent this at present, I shall give a few characters of such persons whom God here calls wicked and unrighteous men; or men of iniquity, as the original phrase imports. And if any

here present can truly say that they are no such persons, then let them put off what is said from themselves, and fancy that it belongs only unto others. But I fear, that if you will deal faithfully with yourselves, none of you but must be forced to smite upon his breast, and say, what have I done ! I am that wicked and unrighteous man or woman that must forsake my ways, and return unto the Lord, that so I may find mercy and pardon at his gracious hands.

1. For you were all born in sin, and brought forth in iniquity : or, as David saith of himself, *you were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did your mothers conceive you*, Psal. li. 5. and therefore you are all *by nature the children of wrath*, as well as others, Eph. ii. 3. that is, you contracted that guilt by coming through the loins of your sinful parents ; for which thou wert obliged to suffer death so soon as born ; only God of his infinite mercy hath been pleased hitherto to reprieve you. But because execution is deferred, it doth not follow that you were not condemned, nay less, that you are not guilty. No, no ; you are all born sinners, both guilty of, and defiled with sin, naturally averse from good, and inclined to evil : and therefore however civil and orderly you may be in your life and conversation, though you be as innocent as the child new-born, or as yourselves were when you came first into the world ; yet your very original sin, and natural corruption, is sufficient to denominate you wicked and unrighteous ; for you are still in your sins.

2. Especially if you live in any known sin, so as constantly to commit, or indulge yourselves in it. For every wicked man hath some wicked way or other which he walketh in ; and therefore, saith the prophet, *Let the wicked forsake his way*. And thus the prophet Jeremiah speaking to the wicked saith, *Turn ye now every one from your evil way, and from*

the evil of your doings, Jer. xxv. 5. implying, that every evil man hath some evil way or other that he walks in; and every one that walketh in any evil way, is an evil or wicked man. And who is there amongst us that doth not walk in one evil way or other? yea, that doth not live in the daily practice of some known sin, or in the constant neglect of some known duty? What though thou beest no drunkard, no adulterer, no thief, no swearer; art thou therefore no sinner? Are they all the sins thou canst be guilty of, or defiled with? Mistake not thyself. A man may be free from all those sins, as to the actual commission of them, and yet be as great a sinner, as wicked a man, as any is in the world besides. Though thou beest not overtaken with drunkenness, thou mayest be with the cares of the world. And though thy heart burn not with lust, it may be inflamed with passion, malice, or revenge. And what though thou takest not another's purse, thou mayest take away his good name; which questionless is as great or greater a theft than the other is: forasmuch as *a good name is better than riches*, as the Wise-man tells us, Prov. xvii. 1 And besides that, thou mayest rob a man in thy shop, as well as upon the high-way; by secret cheating, as well as by open setting upon him. And what though you do harm to none, do you do good to all? Certainly it is your duty to do good to all, as well as to do harm to none that you converse withal. And therefore it is a great mistake to think that you are not wicked, because you think yourselves to be morally honest; or that there is no sin which you need forsake, because there are some which you do not actually commit. And therefore, though you be not so dissolute and debauched persons as some are, do not therefore think that you have no sin to turn from. I accuse none, but leave every one to accuse himself, and to consider whether he doth not

live in some known sin, and by consequence is that wicked person spoken of in my text, who must forsake his way, and return unto the Lord, that he may find mercy with him.

3. Though you live not in the actual commission of any known sin, yet if you still retain love to it, and desires after it, you are yet in your sins, and so the wicked or unrighteous spoken of in my text. It is true, the pharisees, and many of the heathens too, did generally think, that the inward irregularities of the heart, and purposes to sin, which never break forth into acts, are not liable to be punished by God himself, no more than by man. But that is directly contrary to the word of God, which still asserts the law of God to be a spiritual law ; and therefore takes as much cognizance of the inward motions of the will, as of the outward actions of the life ; and commands us not to covet or desire, as well as not to steal, our neighbour's goods ; not to think as well as not to do any harm against them ; and to keep not only our hands, and mouths, but our very *hearts too, with all diligence*, Prov iv. 23. and to *abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*, 1 Pet. ii. 11. And therefore, although thou beest blameless and unspotted as to thy outward life and conversation, so that none can say, black is thine eye, as to any gross sin ; yet know, that God pondereth thy heart, and ransacketh every corner of thy soul, and observes the motions of those very lusts that war within thee, and prevail against thee. Though no man can, yet God sees the blindness of thy mind, the errors of thy judgment, the pride of thy heart, the perverseness of thy will, the unruliness of thy passions, the corruption of thy conscience, the irregularities and disorders of each affection. And as others are termed wicked from their outward debaucheries, God can call thee so from these secret impieties and enormities,

which none are acquainted with but he and thine own conscience.

And therefore, however civil and courteous you may be in your behaviour, however just and honest in your dealings, however free and liberal to the poor, however reverent and devout in your approaches to God ; yet if after all this your heart be not right with him, nor your souls inclined to him, you are still in the number of those whom he here calls the wicked and unrighteous. So that all things rightly considered, there is not a soul here present, but hath just cause to look upon himself as the person whom God here speaks to, saying, *Let the wicked forsake his way.*

2. How should the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ? A question that deserves your serious attention. For you must not think, that every forsaking of sin is that forsaking it which God requires in order to pardon. For I suppose there may be many here present, who do not now live in those sins which heretofore they were addicted to : and yet they may not have forsaken their sins, but their sins have forsaken them. You cannot, and therefore no wonder that you do not, commit them. Or you may forsake your sins, merely for fear of shame, or temporal punishments : which is but a sinful forsaking of sin ; yea, itself is a sin to be forsaken, because it argues, that you fear shame or punishment more than God, and love and prefer yourselves before him, in that you will do that for your own sakes, which you will not do for his ; and you will avoid some sin to secure yourselves from punishment, when you will not do it in obedience to God's command, or for fear of his displeasure.

Not but that it is lawful to have an eye to the punishments which are the just deserts of sin, and commonly the first motive against it : for certainly

God would never have threatened so many temporal punishments against sinners, but to deter them from their sins, Jer. xviii. 11. But if the fear of temporal punishments be the principal or only reason that keeps thee from thy sins, it is manifest that thou lovest them still, and retainest them in thy heart, though thou dardest not actually commit them. And therefore, although the consideration of the temporal evils, which generally attend sin, may lawfully give the first occasion of your forsaking it; yet you must not stay there, but proceed upon higher and more noble grounds than that is, or else you cannot be said properly to forsake sin. Which notwithstanding that you may do, give me leave to use the most proper and genuine arguments to prevail with you to do it; that you may not only forsake your sins, but so forsake them as to obtain a pardon for them.

1 Consider, that there is never a sin you do or can commit, but it is contrary to the nature, and offensive to the majesty of God himself: which, if rightly considered, would be more prevalent with you, and more forcible upon you, than all external punishments in the world. Alas! what is sword or famine; what is plague or sickness; what is shame, or poverty, or death itself, in comparison of the anger and displeasure of the Lord of hosts? who with a frown, or an angry look, can command us into hell, and torment us there; for it is nothing but his frowns that makes hell-flames. So that as his gracious presence makes the joys of heaven, so do the presence of his anger and indignation make the very torments of hell, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. And therefore, so long as God is angry with thee, however rich or happy thou mayest think thyself, thou art in hell though thou knowest it not; and there is nothing wanting to consummate thy misery, but the apprehensions of thy sad condition. For didst thou but see how much the eternal God is displeased with thee, and frowns upon thee, thou

wouldest not be able to endure thyself, but horror and confusion would overwhelm thee.

This, this therefore should be the principal cause that should make us loath our sins, even because God loaths them. And we should therefore forsake them, because otherwise God will forsake us, being angry and offended at us. Thus we find David troubled for this especially, that his sin was committed against God, Psal. li. 4, 5. And in the parable of the prodigal son, though his straits were the first occasion of his coming to himself; yet his having offended God was the principal motive of his return to his father, Luke xv. 21. And whosoever amongst you shall be thus displeased with your sins, because God is displeased at them, and therefore forsake them because they offend him; such forsake them so as is required in my text, in order to their pardon.

2. Consider sin is the transgression of God's law, and upon that account should be forsaken, even because of its contrariety and repugnancy to so holy and just a law as that is. This is to forsake sin for its own sake; not only because it is of dangerous consequence, but because it is sin. This is that which made the reliques of his sins so grievous and irksome to St. Paul, because *the law was spiritual, and he was carnal, sold under sin*, Rom. vii. 12, 13, 14. And this is that which should make us both loath and leave our sins, because they are repugnant to so exact a rule, so divine a law as God's is. And whosoever forsakes his sins upon this account, need not fear but he shall find mercy, according to the promise in my text.

3. Consider how much ingratitude there is in every sin; I say, ingratitude, which itself was always looked upon as one of the greatest absurdities that a man can be guilty of. But if our ingratitude to men be so, what shall we call ingratitude against God? Questionless there is no word to be found in

any language, whereby to express the heinousness of it. And yet in every sin, there is not only rebellion against God, as he is our dread and all-glorious Sovereign; but there is ingratitude against him too, as he is our good and all-gracious Father: which he himself makes use of as a great aggravation of our sins, 2 Sam. xii. 7, 8. Isa. i. 3. v. 2, 3, 4. Deut. xxxii. 6. And this verily is that which should make us all ashamed of ourselves, and blush at each remembrance of ourselves; that we have been so desperately sinful against God, notwithstanding that he hath been so infinitely merciful unto us; that we should live continually upon him, and yet live continually against him; that we should have nothing but what we receive from his mercy, and yet do nothing but what is offensive to his Majesty: oh perverse and ungrateful generation! do we thus requite the Lord for all the mercies that we have received from him? is this all the recompence we give him for his creation and continual preservation of us? Oh shameful ingratitude! the very thoughts whereof should make us even loath and abhor ourselves, and resolve for the future against sin, because it is sin, an offence to God's glory, repugnancy to his laws, and the height of ingratitude in the very abstract.

Consider these things, O all ye that have hitherto indulged yourselves in any known sin, and tell me, whether you have any reason to be so loth to part with your sins: what pleasure, what profit, what good did you ever find in them, that may countervail their evil and malignity? Can there be any pleasure in displeasing God? any profit in losing your own souls? or any good in evil itself? Certainly there can be none: and therefore be advised for your own good to bid adieu this day to all your sins; harbour these spiritual vipers no longer in your breast, but whatsoever you know to be offensive unto God, let it be so to you. Make no longer a trade of sin, nor

walk in the paths that lead to ruin ; but forsake both your former ways and thoughts, neither practising sin in your lives, nor indulging it in your hearts ; but turn ye, turn from all your evil ways, to serve the living God, and you need not fear but you will find grace and favour at his righteous hands, according to my text, *Let the wicked forsake his way.*

But you must not think, that every forsaking of sin hath pardon entailed upon it, but such only whereby we so leave our sins as to cleave to God : for it is not enough to go out of Egypt, unless we enter into Canaan. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well : and therefore it is here said, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord :* so that as sin is the *terminus a quo*, God must be the *terminus ad quem*, in our conversion. It is sin that we must turn from, and it is God we must turn to, otherwise all our turnings will signify nothing. *They return*, saith the prophet, *but not to the Most High ; they are as a deceitful bow*, Hosea vii. 16. implying, that this is but a deceitful conversion, that as a deceitful bow will never hit the mark, nor accomplish what they aim at. And verily the want of knowing or considering this hath been the ruin and downfall of many in Israel ; who forsaking the sins which formerly they lived in, presently conclude themselves to be real converts ; whereas there are several ways whereby a man may turn from his former sins, and yet remain as sinful as formerly he was, or howsoever be far from returning to the Lord, so as to find favour and acceptance with him.

For, first, a man may turn from one sin to another, from an open to a secret, from a public to a private, from a bodily to a spiritual sin : as heretofore, perhaps, thou hast been a profane and debauched wretch ; but now being turned from thy profaneness

and debauchery, that thou art self-conceited, and righteous in thine own eyes, and so art turned from bad to worse, from a publican to a pharisee, from an open sinner to a mock-saint; and so art in a worse condition than thou wast before: for, *seest thou a man wise, as the Wise-man saith, or righteous in his own eyes; there is more hopes of a fool than of him.*

Thus there are too many amongst us, who from prodigal become covetous, from adulterers go a whoring after the idols of this world, from swearing turn to lying, from drunkenness to censoriousness, and from intemperance to pride and self-conceit-edness. And questionless these and such-like sins which they turn to, are every whit as bad or worse than those which they turned from: and therefore this is no forsaking sin in general, but only some particular sins; or rather, it is no forsaking sin at all, but exchanging of one sin for another, and often of a great one for a greater; as our Saviour intimates in the parable of the unclean spirit, Matt. xii. 45.

Neither, in the next place, is it enough to turn from a sinful to a mere civil course of life. Though this be a great conversion in the world's account, it is not so in God's: for generally such an external change as this proceeds from some unsound principle, or some inferior cause or other. Thus, fear of poverty may make a prodigal turn a good husband, and fear or sickness may force the intemperate man to become sober; and the fear of one external punishment or other makes many a man forbear the actual commission of those sins which otherwise he could willingly indulge himself in; and therefore this can be no true conversion, because it is grounded upon false principles. And though it makes some alteration in a man's life, yet it makes none in his heart; inwardly he is as bad as ever. Though he may refrain from the external commission of his former

sins, yet he still retaineth love and affection for them ; or if he doth not, but really loaths as well as leaves his sins ; yea, so as to arrive at the highest pitch of civility that ever the most specious moralist was adorned withal ; to such a man we may say, as our Saviour said to the young man in the Gospel, *Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven*, but yet thou art from it, *one thing thou lackest* : thou must not only eschew evil, but do good ; not only avoid whatsoever God hath forbidden, but thou must perform too whatsoever he hath commanded : thou must not only forsake thy sins, but return unto the Lord.

Nay, lastly, a man may go much higher yet, and yet come short of true conversion : as those do, who having lived wicked and debauched lives, and after being pricked in their conscience for their former sins, and overladen with their weight and burden, presently set upon an austere and reserved way of living amongst men, and some superstitious exercise of religion towards God ; thinking, by this means, to make God amends for the injuries they have formerly committed against him. But this is but a reeling from one extreme to another, and that which hath been the ruin of many souls : as our Saviour plainly sheweth ; where, speaking of the severe sect of the pharisees, he saith, that *when they had made any proselyte* ; that is, turned a publican, or an harlot, or some such wicked person, to their austere and superstitious way of living ; *they made him two times more a child of wrath than themselves*, Matt. xxiii. 15. Yet this is that which is so much mistaken for conversion amongst us ; yea, and amongst the papists too, who speak and boast much of such kind of converts as these are : who having lived many years in gross sins, afterwards being weary of them, to make satisfaction, as they think, for their former lives, undertake some tedious pilgrimage, or else enter into a monastery, and admit

themselves into some religious order, and there spend the rest of their time in whippings and scourgings, in a constant repetition of so many *Pater-nosters* and *Ave-Maria's* every day. And this is that which the papists call religion; and therefore these houses are called religious houses; these orders, religious orders; and such persons, religious persons, and true converts: whereas a man may do all this, and yet be as far from God as ever; for this is not that which God requires of us in our conversion, and therefore looks not upon us as converted because we do it. What cares he for the scourging of our bodies? It is the mortifying our lusts which he calls for. Neither doth he matter all the sacrifices and oblations that you can make him, so much as one sincere act of obedience to his laws, Micah vi. 6, 7, 8.

He therefore that would so turn unto the Lord, as to find mercy with him, must not turn from one sin to another, or from one sect to another, or from one religion to another only; but he must turn from all his sins, from all his former ways and thoughts, and must *return unto the Lord with all his heart*, Joel ii. 12. that is, our hearts must be wholly inclined to God, and our souls be offered up as a whole burnt-offering unto him, without any mental reservation, or hypocritical equivocations with him. We must not halt between two opinions, nor admit of any co-rival with God in our affections: for unless we give him all, we give him none: for how can there be any communion betwixt light and darkness? or what agreement can there be betwixt Christ or Belial, or betwixt God and sin in the same heart? Be not deceived, God will not be mocked. Neither must you think to put him off with fair pretences, and outward shews; or with part, instead of the whole, that is due unto him: neither will he look upon you as returning to him at all, if you leave any part of your hearts behind you, or bring any sin whatsoever along with you.

But if you would return to him, you must leave all things else to close with him ; you must be as much averse from sin, and inclined to God, as you have formerly been averse from God, and inclined to sin. And this is true conversion indeed ; when the whole soul is taken off from all things else, and fixed only upon him that made them ; then all the affections, which before were scattered amongst the creatures, meet and centre only in God : and so yours all must do, if you desire to return to him.

First, your love must not only be abated, but extinguished unto all things else besides him, so as to love nothing above him, nothing against him, nothing equal to him, nothing at all in comparison of him : for we are commanded to love him with all our hearts and strength ; so as to let nothing share with him in this affection, nor reserve any corner of our hearts wherein to lodge any thing besides him, Deut. vi. 5. Yea, our highest affection for other things should be as hatred, rather than love, in comparison of our love to him, Luke xiv 26. and all the reason in the world for it. For seeing we love nothing, but because it is good, we must needs love him above all things because he is the chiefest good : yea, nothing is good in comparison of him, and therefore nothing ought to be loved in comparison of him. And therefore, if you would return unto the Lord, you must loosen your hearts from all things else, and fix them only upon him ; loving him with that exceeding and transcendent love, as to suffer nothing to come into opposition against, no nor in competition with him in this affection.

And as your love is, so should your desires be inclined to him, and him alone ; which is indeed but the natural consequent of the former : for what we love, we cannot but desire ; yea, and our desires of a thing are always proportionable to our love unto it. And therefore he that loves God above all things,

cannot but desire him above all things too ; so as to say with the Psalmist, *Whom have I in heaven but thee ?* Psal. lxxiii. 25. And thus if you would return to the Lord with all your hearts, you must get above the world, and look down upon all things here below as low and despicable nothings in comparison of God ; so as to make him the only object of your soul's desires, and the only centre wherein your inclinations rest.

And your love being thus inflamed towards him, and your desires thus carried after him, your joy cannot but be placed in him : for as we cannot but desire what we love, so we cannot but rejoice in what we do desire, so far as we do enjoy it. And therefore, we in vain pretend to be converted, until we find more solid joy and real pleasure in drawing nigh to God, and enjoying communion with him, than in any thing, or all the things in the world besides. For so long as we take pleasure in any thing more than him, or as much as in him, it is that which we prefer before him, and therefore are not as yet returned to him.

And as we are to abstract our love, desire, and joy from all things else, to fix them upon God as the supreme good ; so also must we make him our only trust and confidence, so as to expect nothing from any thing else, but only from him who made and disposeth all things : for so long as we make flesh our arm, and stay upon creature-helps, we plainly demonstrate that we are still settled and fixed on them, and by consequence are not returned from them unto the Lord, Psal. xx. 7, 8.

But we must still remember so to trust on the power and mercy, as to fear the glory and majesty of the Lord. We are to sanctify him, by making him our fear and our dread, as well as by making him our stay and refuge. For he that feareth any thing as much or more than God, attributes more

power to that than he doth to God: he doth not rightly believe him to be above all things, and therefore it is that he doth not fear him more than all things; which whosoever doth not, is still entangled amongst the creatures, and by consequence not returned to the Lord.

Thus whensoever any soul is truly converted, all its affections return from the creature unto God. What before he loved, now he hates; what before he desired, now he detesteth; what before he made his pleasure, is now his grief; what before he trusted on, he now derides; and what before he fears, he now contemns, in comparison of the Lord. From whence it also follows, that his life and conversation must needs be changed too: for a man's life and actions are both moved and influenced by his will and affections; as he affects, so generally he acteth: and therefore he that loves God's person, cannot but obey his precepts; he that desires his favour, must needs labour to get and keep it; he that rejoices in his presence, is grieved for any thing that offends him; he that trusteth on his promises, cannot but observe the conditions which he requires; and he that feareth his sovereignty, dares not transgress those laws which he hath been pleased to prescribe. And therefore our conversion unto God is necessarily accompanied with sincere and universal obedience to his laws; insomuch that none of you can be said to be returned to the Lord, that wilfully live in the commission of any one sin which you know the Lord hath forbidden, or in the wilful neglect of any one duty which you know that he hath commanded.

Would you therefore understand in few terms what it is to return unto the Lord: in short, it is nothing else but this; so to love God's person, as to desire his favour; so to desire his favour, as to rejoice in his presence; so to rejoice in his presence, as to

trust on his promises ; so to trust on his promises, as to fear his threatenings ; and so to fear his threatenings, as to do whatsoever he hath commanded. But then you will say, who is sufficient for these things ? So say I too ; but howsoever, do but you do what really you can, and you need not fear but God will enable you to do the rest : for it never yet was known, nor ever will be, that he ever failed any one that sincerely did what they could to serve him ; and therefore, do but you do as much as you are able, and God will enable you to do as much as you need. And certainly you have the highest encouragements imaginable to use the utmost of your power in a matter that doth so nearly concern you as this doth ; considering, that if you thus forsake your sins, and return unto the Lord, he will have mercy upon you, and abundantly pardon.

1. He will have mercy upon you ; that is, he will not be like offended mortals, who having received an injury, are implacable, so that no submission or satisfaction will content them ; but God, upon your turning to him, will turn to you ; he will not exercise the severity of his justice upon you, but his bowels will yearn with pity and compassion towards you : so that if you do but throw down the weapons whereby you have fought and rebelled against the King of heaven, and become his loyal subjects for the future ; although his law hath condemned you for rebellious, and ye have hitherto been in continual danger of having it executed upon you ; yet now, upon your repentance and conversion, he will manifest his mercy towards you, not only by taking off your obligations to punishment, and granting you a reprieve, but by receiving you too into his grace and favour, being as fully reconciled to you, as if he had never been offended by you.

But you will say, how can we be sure of this ?

How can we expect, that so just and glorious a being as God is, should ever be reconciled to such obstinate and rebellious creatures as we have been against him? Alas! we deserve each moment to be tumbled headlong into the abyss of misery, for our manifold and great transgressions: how then can we expect ever to find mercy at the righteous hands of God, whom we have so grievously offended?

To that I answer; it is true. there is nothing that we can do that can merit any favour at his hands; and if we look no farther than ourselves, our condition is desperate, and our misery unavoidable. Neither can we see any reason imaginable in ourselves, wherefore he that made us should have any mercy upon us; he having been so frequently affronted, despised, and injured by us, as he hath been: yet howsoever, for reasons best known to himself, drawn certainly out of his own intrinsic and essential goodness, he hath been pleased not only to promise us by word of mouth, but to give it under his hand too, that if the wicked forsake his way, and return to the Lord, he will have mercy upon him; and that if we turn to him, he will turn to us, Zech. i. 3. and. that if we repent and turn, iniquity shall not be our ruin, but we shall surely live, Ezek. xviii. 30, 31, 32. Thus also he expostulates the case with us as pathetically, with as much affection and earnestness, as ever tender father did with his rebellious son, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Hence it is that he calls upon us so earnestly, and invites us to come unto him, that our souls may live, Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. Neither doth he call thus upon us by his prophets only, but also by his only Son, Matt. xi. 28, 29. who also hath promised, that those that come to him, he will in no wise cast out, John vi. 37

Tell me now, my brethren, how would God have expressed his desire of your happiness, and his readi-

ness to receive you, more clearly and more pathetically than he hath done? And what can you desire more than the word of truth itself, to assure you of mercy, if you will but turn; especially, seeing God hath not only said it, but sealed it too with the blood of his only Son, who is able to save to the uttermost all those that turn and come unto him, Heb. vii. 25. And that nothing might deter you, or keep you off from returning to the Lord, no not the multitude nor the greatness of your former sins, he hath not only told you, that upon your repentance and conversion he will have mercy upon you, but also that he will abundantly pardon, or, as it is in the Hebrew, *יִרְכֵּה לְסֻלּוֹת*. *God will multiply to pardon.* As you have abundantly sinned, he will abundantly forgive your sins; as you have multiplied your offences against him, he will multiply his pardons unto you: yea, be your sins never so many, never so great, his mercies are still both more and greater; for your sins are the sins but of finite creatures, whereas his mercies are the mercies of the infinite God, made over also, and confirmed to us, by the infinite merit and satisfaction of his only-begotten Son: in whom therefore whosoever repents and turns to him, cannot but be abundantly pardoned.

Thus I have endeavoured to shew you upon what grounds and terms we may expect pardon and mercy at the hands of God, even upon our repentance of all our sins, and true conversion to the Lord: not as if God would therefore pardon our sins, because we repent of them; or turn to us, because we turn to him: but Christ having made satisfaction for our sins, whosoever repent and are converted, God is pleased to accept of his death in lieu of theirs; and so upon his account not only to discharge and acquit them from their sins, but also to receive them into grace and favour. And all that he requireth of us, in order to the application of Christ's merit to us,

and by consequence to the reinstating us in that happiness which we have lost and forfeited by our sins, is only to forsake our sins, and turn again unto the Lord. And therefore I hope that I need not use any arguments to persuade you to repentance and conversion; your own interest, one would think, being enough to prompt you to it. I am sure there is none of you but must needs be sensible, that you have done many things which you ought not to do, and have not done many things which you ought to do, since you came into the world; and so are guilty of many and great offences against him that sent you hither: by which means you have forfeited your right to whatsoever is good, and are always liable to whatsoever is evil or pernicious to you; insomuch that by reason of your former sins, you are all at this very moment subject to the wrath of God, with all its dismal consequences, and in danger of hell and eternal damnation. How you may prevent and escape this your deserved misery, hath been the subject of this day's discourse; wherein I have discovered upon what account God will have mercy upon you, and pardon your sins; even if you forsake your sins, and turn again unto the Lord. And therefore such amongst you as matter not whether your sins be pardoned or no, you may still continue in them, and take what follows: but if you seriously desire to have your sins forgiven, and your Maker reconciled unto you, you see upon what terms you may expect it, and what you must do that you may obtain it. There is no other remedy; you must either turn from your sins to God, or else God will never turn from his wrath to you. But if any person amongst you shall truly forsake whatsoever sins he knows himself to be guilty of, and return unto the Lord; the Lord hath said it, and he will perform it, that *he will have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon.*

SERMON LXXXVI.

REPENTANCE THE ONLY METHOD OF ESCAPING TEMPORAL JUDGMENTS.

Preached on the anniversary fast for the fire of London.

JOHN V. 14.

Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

THERE are many, I believe, here present at this time, who this day seventeen years saw this great city all in a flame; the merciless element of fire raging so furiously in it, that, maugre all the art and industry that men could use, in a few days reduced much the greatest part of the city into ashes, and made the whole a dreadful and astonishing instance of divine vengeance. It is true, there is nothing doth or can happen in the world, without God's special providence; it is his hand that orders and disposeth all things, according to his own will and pleasure. But of this we may say, as the magicians were forced to say of the plagues of Egypt, *This is the finger of God*, Exod. viii. 19. Whatsoever inferior causes might concur towards the raising or fomenting of this dreadful fire, be sure Almighty God himself was the first and supreme cause; so that we may truly say, *This was the Lord's doings, and it was marvellous in our eyes*. It was he that by a long drought had prepared the city, and made it ready to take fire upon the least occasion; it was he that caused the wind to blow, and so to augment

and carry the flames from one part of the city to the other; it was he that gave authority and power to the raging flames to force their way against as well as before the wind; it was he that armed the fire with that strength and fury, that neither brick, nor stone, nor iron, nor towers, nor churches themselves were able to stand before it; it was he that caused it afterwards to cease in places most likely to be devoured by it, saying then to the fire, as he always doth to the water, *Thus far shalt thou go, and no further.* And that which is most remarkable of all, notwithstanding the general conflagration all over the city, even to the very confines in several places, yet he suffered it no where to go out of the liberties; insomuch that although there were so many thousand houses burnt in the city, there was not so much as one burnt out of it: which is an undeniable argument, that it was a judgment designed particularly for the city, and that it ought to be looked upon as such by all future ages. And how great a judgment it was, none can imagine so well as they that saw and felt it. Only this we may say in general, that Almighty God never manifested his just displeasure and fury against any city in the world, more clearly than he did it at that time against this city, for the many and great provocations which he had observed in it.

But, blessed be his great name for it, in the midst of judgment he hath shewed mercy. And as he was then pleased to order the city to be destroyed for the sins of those that dwelt in it, he hath now so ordered it in his providence, that it is now rebuilt, and restored to its former, or rather to greater strength and splendour than it had before: and most of the churches too, which were then demolished, are now raised up again, and fitted for his service and worship: and, amongst the rest, this where we are now assembled, to commemorate this

the just judgment of God upon this city, to bewail the sins that caused it, and to consider what to do under our present circumstances, and how we may prevent the like or greater judgments for the future: for which purpose I know no text of Scripture more suitable and proper than the words I have now read, wherein our blessed Saviour forewarns a man whom he had cured of a grievous disease, which had troubled him for thirty-eight years together, saying, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

The story, which is very remarkable, in short was this: the poor man, having laboured so many years under a sad distemper, with much ado got to the pool of Bethesda, hoping to be cured, as others were, by getting into it. There our Saviour finds him, and with a word of his mouth cures him of his distemper. After which, the good man goes into the temple. What to do? Doubtless he went to give God public thanks for his miraculous cure, and to implore his blessing and grace to improve it aright, and to live answerably to so wonderful a mercy. There our Lord meets him, as he usually doth those who come sincerely into his special presence, and gives him this divine caution, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

Where we may observe,

1. Our Saviour's counsel, *sin no more.* Thou knowest what sins thou hast hitherto lived in, for which God laid this punishment upon thee: and now thou art healed of thy disease, which was caused by thy sins, avoid those sins which were the cause of it; and not those only, but all manner of sin whatsoever: for the words are general, *sin no more*, do nothing for the future that is offensive unto God, or contrary to his laws, but walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; but devote thyself wholly to his service, who hath been

so merciful unto thee, as to restore thee to thy health and strength again.

But *sin no more*, may you say; how could that be required of him, or of any man, seeing it is certain that no man can live without sin in this world? For as the Wise-man tells us, and all men experience, *there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not*, Eccles. vii. 10. And *if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*, 1 John i. 8.

To that I answer; it is true, no man, so long as he is in the body, can be absolutely free from all sin; insomuch that he that thinks he hath no sin, sins in thinking so, and hath just cause to suspect himself to be one of the greatest of sinners, in that his mind is so blinded that he cannot, or his heart so hardened that he will not, see his own sins; and then it is no wonder, if he be guilty of all, and know it not.

Yet howsoever, although we can never expect to square our lives exactly according to the rule that is set us, it is necessary the rule itself should be exact and accurate. Our Saviour doth not tell the man that he could live without sin, but that he ought to do so. He ought to sin no more, even in a legal and strict sense: for we are all obliged by the law of God to be as perfect, as free from sin, as our Lord himself was, who *did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*. And in an evangelical sense, there is none of us but may, by the assistance of God's grace, avoid all manner of sin, so far as not to have any love to it, nor any delight and pleasure in it; yea, so far as not to indulge and allow ourselves in it, nor to suffer it to reign and domineer over us, Rom. vi. 12, 14. And this is that which our Saviour's counsel and command imparts; even that the man must make it his constant care and study to forsake and

avoid all manner of vice and wickedness, and to perform sincere and constant obedience to all the commands of God, to the utmost of his power and knowledge. And whosoever doth so, God for Christ's sake looks upon him as if he did not sin at all; so that he will not only pardon such a man's infirmities, but he will accept of his sincere endeavours, instead of absolute perfection, upon the account of what Christ, his Son, hath done and suffered for mankind. And in this sense, we all both ought and may so live for the future, as to perform what our Saviour commands; even, *sin no more*.

II. Here is the reason of our Saviour's counsel, *lest a worse thing come unto thee*. Which implies,

I That sin had been the cause of all his trouble and sickness before. This our Saviour plainly intimates to him, in that he adviseth him to prevent the like or greater judgments for the future, by sinning no more as heretofore he had done: for this plainly shews, that sin had been the sole cause of all his distempers. And so, indeed, it is of all the troubles that ever did or can befall us; we must even thank ourselves, and our sins for them: for if we had never offended God, be sure he would never have afflicted us; all the afflictions which he lays upon us being nothing else but the execution of his just displeasure for those sins that we have committed against him.

Consider therefore, and bethink yourselves of all the troubles, miseries, or calamities, that you ever felt, or saw, or heard of in the world; and you may look upon them all as the just deserts and consequences of sin. Are men's minds ever racked and tormented with grief and sadness? Are their bodies liable to pains and aches, to heats and colds, to maladies and distempers of all sorts, and at length to death itself? Do they meet with losses in their trade and commerce? with crosses and disappointments in their designs and projects? with fears and cares

about their present estate and condition in the world? Is a fruitful land become a wilderness? a flourishing kingdom turned into an Aceldama, a field of blood and confusion? In short, is a great and renowned city burnt to ashes, and all its stately fabrics laid even with the ground, out of which they were at first taken? Are innumerable heaps of goods and commodities, fetched with great care and hazard of men's lives from the remotest parts of the world by long and tedious voyages, all consumed in a moment, and turned into heaps of rubbish? Did thousands of people lose in a few days all that they had been getting for many years together, so as to be reduced to extreme poverty and want? Were holy as well as profane places demolished, so that people had not where to perform their public devotions, and to humble themselves before that God whom they had offended? All this, and whatsoever else ever did or shall happen to mankind, to their grief and shame, must be ultimately resolved into those sins which they, ungrateful creatures, have committed against the almighty Creator and Governor of the world. For as there is none but he can lay such punishments upon us, so it is only sin for which he doth it.

Hence therefore, whatsoever trouble or calamity befalls us, instead of repining at it, or revenging ourselves upon the instruments of it, we should search or try our ways, and consider where we have offended God, and so brought this evil upon ourselves. And though we cannot always find out the particular sin for which the punishment is inflicted, yet we may be confident it is for our sins in general. And there are many punishments that have the very character of the sin for which they are sent engraven upon them so clearly, that he that runs may read it; and others vested with such circumstances, from whence it may be easily deduced.

As for example: there were many sins, it is true,

which the inhabitants of this city were guilty of, whereby they deserved to have their habitations destroyed; as pride, malice, intemperance, uncleanness and covetousness, deceit, swearing, perjury, oppression, extortion, and the like. But these were the sins only of some particular persons, and common to them with the rest of mankind; the inhabitants of all other cities, as well as this, being guilty of such vices as these. Although it cannot be denied, but that God might justly be displeased with the citizens of London more than with others, even for these sins, by reason that they were committed against greater light and knowledge than others were, whereby greater punishments were justly due to them; there being certainly no city in the world, that ever enjoyed the Gospel and means of grace more fully and constantly, than this city hath done ever since the Reformation.

But if we enquire into those particular sins, which may seem in a more especial manner to have brought this judgment upon the city, there are two things in the fire itself that seem to give great light unto them: first, that it was not a judgment only upon some private citizens, but also upon the city itself, the far greatest part of it being destroyed; from whence it is easy to infer, that whatsoever hand the sins of particular persons might have in it, the sins of the city in general, or the major part of it, were the chief occasion of this so general a conflagration. And then, secondly, it was no ordinary judgment, but so great, so wonderful and extraordinary, that the like was scarce ever heard of in the world before; and therefore it cannot so well be ascribed to the ordinary sins that mankind is usually guilty of, but to some such extraordinary wickedness, as was never, or very rarely, committed before.

Now these things being duly considered, it is easy to find out the Achan that troubled the city, the sin

or sins that brought so heavy a judgment upon it. For they that lived in those days, as many here present did, or that read the history of the late rebellion, cannot but know that this city was the great promoter and abetter of it. The whole city, or at least the greatest part of it, in those days, being poisoned with such schismatical and rebellious principles, that nothing would serve their turns, but the total extirpation both of the ecclesiastical and civil government of the nation. Hence it was that those riots and tumults were here raised, which forced his Majesty to withdraw, and set up his standard in his own defence: so that the war was plainly begun here; and so it was carried on too by a constant supply of men, arms, and money, not only from citizens, but from the city itself, or the major part of them: as is plain from the several acts of common-council which were then made in those days, more like the acts of the council of war than those of a civil government.

A council of war in actual rebellion against their king: for so the city was for many years together, plundering, sequestering, imprisoning, decimating, murdering, all they could get into their clutches that adhered to him; until at length they brought one of the most pious and excellent princes that ever lived to the block, and in the face of the sun murdered him before his own gate.

Now this horrid fact, to which so many sins of the deepest dye concurred, so far as particular persons were any way guilty of it, however they escape in this world without sincere repentance, they either are or will be punished for it in the next. But the city itself, as a body politic, is not capable of rewards or punishments in the other world: and therefore Almighty God, to manifest his just displeasure and indignation against it, for those atrocious crimes which he had observed in it, was pleased to punish

it in this world. And seeing such extraordinary sins deserved suitable or extraordinary punishments, he in an extraordinary manner caused the greatest part of it to be burnt down to the ground ; that as the greatest part of it was concerned in the sin, so the greatest part of it might undergo the punishment which was due to it : that so all the world might acknowledge the infinite wisdom and justice of God, in proportioning the punishment to the sin : and that this, and all other cities, might take warning from hence, not to raise such a flame and combustion in the kingdom, as this did then, lest at long-run it come home unto themselves, as this plainly did.

II. These words imply, that notwithstanding that the man was now whole, yet, if he continued in his sins, something worse would befall him. It is true, he had been very sorely afflicted before for many years, not being able to help himself, as is plain from ver. 7. But, however, our Lord here gives him to understand, that how bad soever it had been with him before, it would be worse hereafter, unless he left off his sins.

And though these words were spoken only to that one man, they are recorded on purpose that all might take notice of it, and not think that when God had removed any judgment from them, he will punish them no more for their sins, although they continue in them ; but expect something worse to come unto them, than they ever yet met withal. And indeed, both reason and justice require it should be so : for when God in great mercy hath eased men from those pressures which he laid upon them for their sins ; the sins which they afterwards commit are an abuse of his mercy, as well as a breach of his law ; and therefore being greater sins, they justly deserve greater punishments at his hands. And it is but reason that they should have judgment without mercy, who have abused that very mercy which was

shewed them in the midst of judgment. And this is our very case at this time. As God in great justice was pleased to destroy this city, so in great mercy he hath raised it up again; insomuch, that now the fire is almost quite forgotten; at least, there are scarce any footsteps of it to be seen. The city is whole again, as being not only wholly rebuilt, but inhabited too, as it was before. And now, if it be not your own faults you may live safe and secure under God's protection: but know this, that if you return to your former sins and extravagancies, for which the city was before destroyed, God hath more and greater judgments in store for you than that was, which he will most certainly inflict upon you, except you repent and turn to him with all your hearts. Hear what he himself saith, Lev. xxvi. 14, 21, 24, 28. Wherefore you may assure yourselves, that how much soever you have suffered already, if you still continue in your rebellion against him, God hath greater judgments behind for you than ye ever yet felt. It is true this was a sad and dreadful fire, but it was not like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. xix. 24. which in a short time destroyed not only the houses, but all the inhabitants too, except one family. And if you provoke him to it, he can send the like upon you whensoever he pleases. And what if the fire was ushered in by the plague, and accompanied with a war? He hath a worse plague, and a worse war, at hand for you, whensoever he sees good to send it: a plague like that in the rebellion of Korah, that in a few hours destroyed near fifteen thousand people, Numb. xvi. 49. Or like that in the time of David, that in less than a day devoured seventy thousand, 2 Sam. xxiv. 15. And a war, like that at the siege of Jerusalem, foreign and intestine at the same time: so that you shall not only be invaded by a foreign enemy, but sheath your swords in one another's bowels.

And as those judgments, though they be of the

same kind, yet are much worse than those which you have already felt; so he hath as bad or worse than those, of another nature for you. For he can destroy you with famine, as he did Samaria, 2 Kings vi. 21. or with an overflowing deluge, as he did the old world, Gen. vii. 17, 18. Or he can command the earth to open her mouth, and swallow you up alive, as it did Korah, and his accomplices in schism and sedition, Numb. xvi. Or if he still continue you upon earth, and your earthly blessings to you, yet he can curse both you and them, so that you shall receive no benefit or comfort from them, Mal. ii. 2.

These are sad judgments you will say; and yet God hath far worse than those in store for you, if ye will not learn obedience by what he hath already laid upon you. For these are only temporal, whereas he hath spiritual judgments also to inflict upon you. For if ye should continue to turn faith into faction, and religion into rebellion, he can deprive you of the means of grace which you so neglect, yea and of the Gospel itself, and send it to another people that will improve it better, Rev ii. 5. A sad instance we have of this in Africa, where the Gospel was once so preached, that the African was certainly one of the most famous churches in the world, most eminent for learning and piety; and so it continued for many years, until at length the sect of the Donatists, much like to our Presbyterians and Independents, under the specious but hypocritical pretence of purity in worship, growing numerous, the whole church was overspread with schism and faction; which prevailed so far, that all their religion was turned into disputes and controversies about it: and then God was pleased to take his Gospel from them, not leaving so much as the face of a church among them; insomuch, that for many ages last past, and to this day, the whole country is become Mahometan and heathenish, and no Christian is suffered to live among them, except in Tangier,

and some few places belonging to the Spaniards and Portuguese. God grant that the schisms, which have reigned so long among us, may not have the same dismal effects upon this nation.

And what if God should, as I hope he will, continue his Gospel, and the means of grace, to so ungrateful a people; yet he can withdraw his blessing from them, or blind your eyes, that ye shall not see the things that belong to your peace, or suffer you to be seduced into error, heresy, schism, blasphemy, *sending you strong delusions, that ye should believe a lie*, 2 Thess. ii. 11. a judgment which a great part of this city hath lain under for many years together. And after all that is come upon you, he can harden your hearts as he did Pharaoh's, and make you stupid and senseless of your sad condition. And worse than all this still, he can let you alone in your sins without control, never punish you at all, nor correct you for them in this life, but still suffer you to go on, heaping up wrath against the day of wrath upon your own heads, without ever minding you of the sad consequences of it. Hos. iv. 17. Isa. i. 5.

And when he hath laid all those, both temporal and spiritual, punishments upon you, he hath not yet done with you. No, the worst of all is still behind, and that is eternal ruin and destruction in hell-fire, Matt. xxv. 41.

Consider these things, and then tell me, whether if you continue in your sins, worse things may not come unto you than ye have yet felt.

3. This saying of our Lord implies, that the best and only way to prevent and secure ourselves from future judgment, is to forsake those sins for which we have formerly suffered. For this is the means that our Lord himself here prescribes for it, saying, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*.

And this certainly holds good in all cases; so that whatsoever sins any man hath formerly committed,

if he heartily repent of them, and forsake them, so as never more to return to them, he may be confident that, in and through the merits of Christ's death and passion, he shall never be punished any more for them. For thus saith the Lord, *If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned to him,* Ezek. xviii. 21, 22. And again, *Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin,* ver. 30. and so frequently elsewhere. This being indeed the great blessing that is purchased for us, and promised to us in the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins; whereby we are absolved and discharged from those obligations which lay upon us, to undergo the punishments which God hath threatened against them: for if our obligation to punishment be taken off, be sure the punishment itself will never be inflicted upon us. And therefore, whosoever desires to be freed from those punishments, which he either feels or fears by reason of his former sins; let him but now forsake them, and turn to the Lord with all his heart, and he hath the word of God himself for it, that his sins shall be all pardoned, and he shall never be punished any more for them.

And so it is in our present case: this city justly provoked God to lay this heavy judgment upon it: and if ye continue in the same sins, ye must expect that something worse will come unto you: whereas if ye sincerely repent of your former sins, and serve God for the future with a perfect heart and a willing mind, ye will thereby secure both yourselves and city from future judgments, and live continually under the favour and protection of Almighty God.

Now, having thus briefly both explained these words, and applied them to the sad occasion of our

present meeting, I hope I need say no more, but only desire you to keep this divine saying of our Saviour always in our minds and memories, whensoever any judgment is laid upon you, and particularly when you commemorate the fire of London, as we do this day ; and still apprehend our Saviour saying to you, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.*

You cannot but be all sensible what a great confusion this city was once in upon this day, when the wrath of God burnt so furiously against it, that the greatest part of it was laid waste and desolate. But, blessed be God for it, it is now rebuilt, and so made whole again. And as our Saviour meeting the poor man, whom he had cured of a long distemper, in the temple, first uttered these words to him ; so now finding you at this time here, he repeats the same to you, and to the whole city, *Behold thou art made whole ; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.* Do not think that God hath spent all his arrows upon you, or that he cannot or will not punish you any more for your sins, although you continue in them. No, mistake not yourselves ; he hath still more and greater punishments ready at hand, which he will most certainly inflict upon you, unless you leave off those sins whereby ye have deserved them.

Wherefore be advised before it be too late. You saw upon this day, what *a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God* : have a care that you do not so again ; for if you do, ye may be confident, that he will punish you yet seven times more for your sins. And therefore as ever ye desire not to feel greater judgments than ever ye yet felt, break off your sins by repentance, and your iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor. Avoid for the future whatsoever ye know to be offensive to God, and dishonourable to his great name, and to that holy religion that he hath established among you : especially take heed that you fall not again into those horrid

vices for which you have smarted so much already. Suffer not the devil nor his agents to seduce you any more into schism and faction, into riots and sedition, into treasons and rebellions against your prince, and such-like sins as are destructive of government, and therefore will be severely punished, as ye have found by woful experience, by the universal Governor of the world. It is not long, ye know, since a great part of the city were running into these extravagancies again; which, if they had taken effect, would have brought not only the whole city, but kingdom also, to utter ruin and destruction. But he that stilleth the raging of the sea, was pleased likewise to restrain the madness of the people, and so put a stop to those judgments which were ready to fall upon the city. So that ye have time now to consider and bethink yourselves what to do, that ye may prevent them for the future. And when ye have considered all ye can, you will find no other way possible to do it, but by following your Saviour's counsel and command, *Sin no more.*

Make no more schisms or divisions in the church, nor riots and tumults against the state. Despise dominions no more, nor speak evil of dignities. Practise no more treason or rebellion against the king, nor oppose those who are commissioned by him. Run no more into corners, nor neglect the public worship of the most high God. Profane his sacred name no more, nor abuse it, to palliate any wicked project and device. Mock God no more, nor play the hypocrite with him that is the searcher of hearts. Separate yourselves no more from our church, nor refuse the means of grace and salvation, which are there administered unto you. Carry yourselves no more so irreverently in God's presence, nor think much to bow down and worship him, when ye approach to his divine Majesty. Turn your backs no more on the holy sacrament, nor refuse the great mercies which

are there offered to you. Turn the grace of God no more into lasciviousness, nor despise the judgments he hath laid upon you. Suffer yourselves no more to be seduced by lying spirits into error and heresy, nor tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine; but keep close to the articles of our church, as grounded upon the word of God. Allow yourselves no more in any known sin, nor omit any known duty, either to God or man. In short, *fear God, and honour the king, and meddle no more with them which are given to change.* But take warning from what ye have already felt, and remember our Saviour's words, *Behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

SERMON LXXXVII.

REPENTANCE THE ONLY METHOD OF ESCAPING
ETERNAL JUDGMENTS.

LUKE xiii. 3.

I tell you, nay ; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

WHOSOEVER converseth with the writings and histories of the first ages of our church, cannot but acknowledge, that they exceeded ours in the real practice of the Christian religion, as much as ours exceed them in the more outward and hypocritical profession of it. In those days, we might read the Gospel of Christ in the lives of Christians ; and know what their Master taught, by seeing what his disciples did. How devout, how solemn, how magnificent were they in their public service and worship of Almighty God ! how zealous for the faith of Christ ! how steadfast in the defence of it ; ready every moment, yea, ambitious to seal it with their own blood ! how humble and lowly were they in their own eyes ! how sober and modest in their carriage towards others ! how just and righteous in all their dealings ! The vices that are so common among Christian professors now, were scarce ever heard of amongst Christians in those golden ages. Where do you read of their pride and self-conceitedness, their luxury and covetousness, their censuring or backbiting one another ? these are properly the reigning sins of our

times, which the primitive Christians were so averse from, that malice itself could scarce ever fasten any such thing upon them. And as for sedition and rebellion against their lawful magistrates, it was not so much as named amongst them, as became Christians. Insomuch, that although for several ages together the magistrates were all pagans, and were often persecuting of them even unto death; yet all the while, there is not the least footstep to be found of any rebellion, so much as designed by any one Christian in the world. So strictly did the Christians in those times keep to the rules of Christ and his apostles, making it their business to walk in all the commandments of God blameless.

And if we should enquire into the reasons, why all true Christian grace and virtue doth not flourish now, as much as then, I cannot but attribute it very much to this; that the great and necessary duty of fasting is so generally neglected in our days, which anciently was the constant exercise of all Christians, especially at this time of the year: it being the general custom of the church in those days, to devote the whole time of Lent to fasting and prayer, to the exercise of repentance and mortification, to the examining their hearts, and humbling themselves before Almighty God, imploring his aid and assistance of them in the performance of what he required from them. By which means, their hearts were brought into so holy a frame and disposition, and they were furnished with so much grace and power from above, as enabled them to walk as became truly penitent and believing Christians all the year after.

And for the better attaining these great and glorious ends in the observation of this fast, it was the usual custom of the bishops and pastors of the several churches in those days, to preach frequently to the people, to excite them to a strict observance of this fast, and to instruct them how to observe it, so as

that they might receive real benefit and advantage by it, in order to their present service, and future enjoyment of the chiefest good. Hence we have extant at this day many excellent and divine sermons, preached by the great lights of the primitive church upon this occasion ; some immediately before it, and in order to it ; others during the time of Lent. Such are several of the sermons or homilies of St. Basil, St. Ambrose, St. Chrysostom, and St. Augustine : Maximus Taurinensis also, Leo the Great, Chrysologus, Cæsarius bishop of Arles, and many others of the same ages, have at this day sermons extant upon this occasion. Indeed, this was the principal time of the year for preaching ; and such churches as had little or no preaching all the year besides, were sure to have it in Lent.

And that the people were as diligent in hearing, as the bishops were in preaching at this time, is plain from a remarkable passage in Athanasius's apology to Constantius the emperor ; where that great champion of the Christian faith tells the emperor, that ἐν ταῖς συνάξεσι τῆς τεσσαρακοστῆς, at their assemblies or congregations in Lent, there was such a throng and crowd of people in the churches of Alexandria, that many of both sexes, and of all ages, both old and young, were even stifled in the press, and carried home for dead. But, as the father adds, τοῦ Θεοῦ παρέχοντος τέδινηκε μὲν οὐδείς, by the blessing of God, none died. Which one instance is enough to shew how religiously this fast was observed at that time : and it is no wonder, that they who are thus given up to fasting and prayer, were eminent for all true religion and virtue.

Now it having pleased the most high God, to put it into the heart of our pious and learned bishop, to use all means possible to reduce our church to its first constitution, even to an exact conformity with the primitive, as it was designed at the Reformation ;

for that end, amongst other things, he hath been pleased to revive this ancient custom of preaching at this time, hoping thereby, that many may, by the blessing of God, be prevailed upon to live up to the rules and orders of our church ; and by consequence as the primitive Christians did, and all true Christians ought to live. Hence therefore, that so good a design may have its desired effect at least upon you, who go so far in this good old way, as to be present upon this solemn occasion, I thought good to pitch upon the words which I have now read, for the subject of my present discourse, as containing the necessity of repentance, the great work of this time, for which we fast and pray, and without which neither fasting nor praying will avail us any thing ; our blessed Saviour himself having told you with his own mouth, that *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

The occasion of which words in brief was this : Whilst Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, several Galileans. supposed by some to be the Samaritans spoken of by Josephus, made an insurrection there ; for which Pilate not only slew them, but mingled their blood with the sacrifices which they had offered. Upon this, the censorious Pharisees, or some such kind of injudicious and uncharitable people, presently began to censure and condemn them for very wicked and ungodly men, only because God was pleased to lay such an extraordinary punishment upon them. But when our Saviour had heard this sad story, and the people's censure upon it, he presently teacheth them another lesson ; *Suppose ye, said he, that these Galileans were sinners above all other Galileans, because they suffered such things ? I tell you, nay : but except, &c.* And to bring it home to the Jews, he instanceth in another sad disaster that befel eighteen persons in Jerusalem itself, verse 4. and then repeats the same words again, *I tell you, nay : but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

As if he should have said, For all that you have heard of these great judgments that have happened unto others, do not you therefore judge them worse than yourselves; for whatsoever thoughts you may have of yourselves, I tell you, I assure you, that *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*. Where the words, ὁμοίως and ὡσαύτως, both which we translate *likewise*, are not so to be understood, as if they signified, that all should perish in the like or same manner as the others did, but that they should perish in general, or to all eternity: for our Lord here takes occasion from their speaking of others' temporal, to mind them of their own eternal, destruction, and to acquaint them with the only way whereby to avoid it, even by repenting. *But I say unto you, &c.* Which words are the more to be observed by us, both because they were spoken by our Saviour himself, and because he expresseth them with so great an asseveration. *I tell you: I, the Son of God, and the only Saviour of mankind: I, that am come on purpose to save you from perishing: I tell you; that, except ye repent, &c.*

. Now that you may fully understand your Saviour's mind and intent in these words, we shall consider,

I. What he means by repenting.

II. What by perishing.

III. What necessity there is for our repenting, in order for our being preserved from perishing; and so what reason we have to believe this proposition, that, *except ye repent, ye shall all perish*.

First therefore: what are we here to understand by repentance? a question, which none of you can think either needless, or impertinent. For as you all desire not to perish, you cannot but be equally concerned to understand what it is to repent, without which you cannot but perish. And, besides that, how many have thought they have repented, when indeed they have not? and that merely too

upon this account, because they have not clearly understood the true nature and notion of it. The papists ordinarily make repentance to consist in nothing else but in a little contrition for their sins, confession of them to the priest, and then doing penance for them; that is, inflicting some pecuniary or corporal punishment upon themselves, either of their own accord, or else by order of their priest: and then they do not only think that they have repented sufficiently; but also, that they have made abundant recompence and satisfaction to God for all their sins against him. But if hell torments can never satisfy God's justice for our sins, (for if they ever could, they would not be eternal,) how much less can a few inconsiderable chastisements of our bodies do it?

And among ourselves, how many are there that cheat and delude themselves into a vain and groundless conceit that they have repented, merely because they have had some transient passions of grief and sorrow for their sins; or because they have left off some of the more gross and scandalous crimes which they were wont to be addicted to. But if this was all the repenting that is required of us, it would be easy enough to do it. But mistake not yourselves, repentance contains a great deal more in it than all this amounts to; yea, so much, that when you understand it fully, you will conclude it to be a very hard and difficult work to flesh and blood: yet it is that which you must all do, or else be undone for ever. And therefore, I shall faithfully acquaint you with whatsoever is required to the due performance of it.

For which end we must first know, that repentance, properly so called, doth not consist in any outward act whatsoever; but although it manifesteth and expresseth itself in all the actions of a man's life; yet it is seated only in the mind, and is properly

nothing else but the recovery or restitution of the mind from its former folly and distraction, into a right frame and constitution. And so much is implied in the very word here used, Ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήτε, *Except you change your minds*; for so the word properly signifies, both according to the notation, and also according to the ancient usage of it, as might easily be shewn. And thus our Saviour himself describes the repenting prodigal, by his coming to himself, and so being of another, a more sound and sober mind than he was before, Luke xv. 17. And so when any one truly repents, his mind is quite altered from what it was before; its bent and inclinations being taken off from sin, and turned unto God: hence, in the language our Saviour spake, the ordinary word for repentance is **الرجوع** *conversion*. And therefore it is more than probable, that our Saviour expresseth himself when he spake these words according to the Syriac translation, which we now have of them; which is, **ܐܝܬܝܢ ܕܢܚܝܬܝܢ** *Except ye return, or be converted*. And indeed, nothing can be more plain, both from the Old and New Testament, than that repentance and conversion are one and the same thing: so that none can be said properly to repent, but he that turns from sin and evil, to God and goodness; the several passions or affections of his mind being averse from the evil which before they were inclined to, and inclined to the good, which before they were averse from. Which, that we may the better understand, we shall briefly consider how, in true repentance, the mind first turns from sin, and then how it turns to God.

First therefore, the mind turns from sin, not only by taking off its concupiscible affections, as love, joy, and the like, from it; but likewise, by placing its contrary passions upon it, especially these four, fear, grief, hatred, and detestation; for in true repentance, fear commonly leads the van. When a man considers

with himself, how great those sins are which he hath committed against God; how great a God he is, against whom he hath committed them; and, by consequence, how great those torments are which he hath deserved by them: when he considers these things, I say, he cannot but fear and tremble at the remembrance of his sins, and at the thoughts of that evil, which is ready to fall upon him for them. Which fear of future evil makes him heartily sorry for his former sins, whereby he hath made himself obnoxious to it. The remembrance whereof is so grievous to him, the burden so intolerable, that he is scarce able to endure himself, his heart being every moment ready to sink within him at each consideration of his folly and madness, in offending so great and gracious a God as he hath done. And verily, this sense and sorrow for our sins is so great a part of true repentance, that it is often put for the whole. But where it is sincere, it stays not there: but this remorse and grief for sin is always accompanied with, or rather it is followed by, an hating and loathing of it, as of that which is not only offensive unto God, contrary to his laws, and destructive to our own souls; but unbefitting our very nature, and contrary to that excellent frame and temper wherein we were at first created: and therefore cannot but be the proper object of our hatred and abhorrence. And when this hatred against sin is once enkindled in our souls, it soon breaks forth into a detestation of it, resolutions against it, and constant, sincere endeavours to fly from it. Which *fuga* or flight from sin is that passion of the mind which is opposed to desire. Thus, in true repentance, the mind is changed; its concupiscible affections being wholly taken off from sin, and its contrary passions placed upon it.

But this is not all yet. For repentance doth not only put a man upon refusing the evil which he be-

fore chose ; but likewise upon choosing that good he before refused. And so it doth not turn his affections from one sin to another, but from all sin to God. Neither indeed is it possible to turn from all sin, without turning unto God : itself being a sin, and a great one too, not to turn to God. And therefore when there is a real change wrought in the mind, such a one as may justly be termed repentance ; the will is not only taken off from sin and vanity, but it is wholly bent and inclined to God and goodness, so as to be stedfastly resolved for the future to live in newness of life. Which choice, and resolution of the will, carries all the affections along with it : so that now the true penitent begins to prize and love God above all things else, and to take pleasure in pleasing and obeying of him, and to desire his love and favour more than all things in the world besides.

And thus a man's mind is quite altered from what it was. His affections all shifting hands, as it were, and changing objects with one another. For what he before loved, he now hates ; and what before he hated, he now loves. He is now troubled for those sins he used to take pleasure in, and takes pleasure in those duties he used to be troubled at. He was wont to follow after evil, and fly from good ; but now on the contrary he follows what is good, and flies from evil : and so is quite another thing than what he was, as to every passion of his mind, and motion of his soul.

And then, lastly, a man's mind being thus changed, and all his affections reduced into a due order, his life and conversation cannot but be so too : for it is the heart that influenceth all our actions. If that be good, our actions cannot but be so too. Hence it is, that good works do necessarily, yea, naturally, flow from true repentance, and can never be separated from it. And therefore they are called, *works*

meet for repentance, Matt. iii. 8. So that it is in vain to pretend to repentance, without amendment of life. For trees do not more naturally bear their proper fruits, than true repentance brings forth good works. Good works, I say, in general. For it is not any particular act or acts that can manifest our repentance, but an universal obedience unto all the laws of God, to the utmost of our power and skill, and a sincere performance of all such works as we know or believe to be truly good, whether they have respect to God or man.

When such a change, therefore, as I have now described, is wrought in your hearts, and from thence diffused into all your actions; then, and not till then, you may properly be said to have repented, and done that, without which, Christ himself here tells you, *ye must all perish*. And so I come to the next thing which I promised to shew, even what we are here to understand by perishing.

The words here used are, πάντες ὁμοίως ἀπολεῖσθε, *ye shall all likewise perish*; or be destroyed, as the word properly signifies, and is commonly translated: neither is there any kind of destruction, but what is imported by it. But here it certainly denotes that destruction under which all other is comprised, that which our sins deserve, and, except we repent of them, will bring upon us, even hell-fire; which is ordinarily in Scripture expressed by *destruction*, 2 Thess. i. 9. Hence Judas is called *the son of perdition*, or destruction, John xvii. 12. because he went *to his own place*, Acts i. 25. that is, in plain English, to hell: which is therefore called *his own place*, because it was due unto him, and appointed for him; as it is indeed for all impenitent sinners whatsoever; they have nothing which they can so properly call their own as hell. This they have abundantly deserved, and so have an absolute right and title to it. And they need not fear being kept out, when they

go into the other world to take possession of it: for Christ himself assures them, they shall all go thither, in that he saith, *They shall all perish.*

But here, perhaps, you may expect, that I should give you a description of this place which so properly belongs to you, if you continue in your sins without repenting of them. But you must excuse me; for I am as unable to describe it, as I am unwilling ever to see or feel it. Alas! I cannot think of it without fear and trembling, nor speak of it without horror and amazement, as knowing that both myself, and every soul here present, hath deserved to be there before now; and to experience that, which no tongue is able to express! Howsoever, that you may not be altogether ignorant of the place you must all go to ere long, except you repent, I shall mind you in general of two things much to be observed in it: and they are such, as that the serious consideration of them cannot surely but prevail upon you to repent, without any more ado.

First, therefore; you must know this is a place where there is no such thing as pleasure and comfort, either real or imaginary, to be found. It is true there is nothing upon earth which we can take any real delight in; yet, howsoever, you can make a shift to fancy to yourselves a great deal of pleasure in something or other which you meet with here below. But when you once come thither; as there is nothing that will be really good for you, so neither will you find any thing that you can so much fancy or imagine to be so. Yet you will not only be stripped of all true comfort, but of all expectation of it too. Could you have any ground to hope, that though you have no comfort for a while, yet the time will come when you shall; the very thoughts and expectations of it would be a comfort to you. But you will be so far from hoping for it, that you will be certainly assured, that you shall never have

it ; but that as you are at first, so you shall always be, deprived of whatsoever is or can be a comfort to you.

And therefore, if you be still resolved upon it, to retain your sins, and so bid defiance both to heaven and hell too ; be it known unto you, the time is coming, when you must bid adieu, farewell, to all, both real and seeming comfort, so as never to know what it means more. For as you can carry none along with you, be sure you will find none there, where all impenitent sinners must live for ever.

And yet this is not all neither. But, in the second place, as you will be there deprived of whatsoever is or can be good and convenient for you ; so you will be tormented too with whatsoever is or can be evil, painful, or destructive to you. For your Saviour himself hath told you beforehand, what he will one day say unto you ; even, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*, Matt. xxv. 41. *Depart from me* : by that you will be deprived of all good. *Into everlasting fire* : there you will find whatsoever is evil, or grievous, either to your souls or bodies, and that for evermore.

But I shall insist no longer upon this ungrateful subject. Neither should I have insisted at all upon it, but that it is necessary for you to be sometimes minded of your latter end, and of the sad and dismal consequences of your sins, except you repent, and turn sincerely from them ; your Saviour himself having told you, that *except you repent, you must all perish*. Under which one word, is comprehended all that misery and torment which I before spake of, and infinitely more than I am able to express, or conceive. All which will most certainly fall upon every soul here present, that doth not repent and turn to God.

But this, I know, many are very loth to believe, because they would not have it to be so. And did

you verily believe it, I am almost confident you would not dare to live in any known sin whatsoever; nor put-off your repentance, as heretofore, from day to day. Wherefore, that I may convince you of it; having shewn you what it is to repent, and what it is to perish; I shall now, in the last place, shew the necessary connection between these two; not repenting and perishing: and so, that unless a man do repent, there is no help for it; he must of necessity perish. Now, to explain this, we must know, there is a two-fold necessity of repentance under the Gospel itself: *necessitas præcepti et medii*.

First, repentance is still necessary, because commanded. For Christ hath not taken off any of our obligations to repentance, but rather hath made them stronger. For now that Christ is come into the world, God doth in a peculiar manner, *command all men every where to repent*, Acts xvii. 30. Which command was first proclaimed by our Saviour's own mouth: yea, the first command that he ever laid upon mankind, after he made himself known unto them, was, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, Matt. iv. 17. And therefore it is a groundless and absurd, as well as dangerous and damnable opinion, to assert, that now that Christ hath suffered, and made satisfaction for our sins, we are obliged only in gratitude and ingenuity to repent of them. For we are as much bound in conscience to repent of our sins now, as if Christ had never died for them. Yea, if possible, and more too; because the command is not only the same, but it is now enforced with greater obligations, and stronger inducements to obedience, than ever it was before: nay, and more than that too; for all that Christ hath done and suffered for our sins, yet repentance is as necessary, as if it was the only means still whereby to expiate our sins, and to regain the love and favour of Almighty God towards us.

And that is the second kind of necessity there still is of repentance ; it being the only means whereby it is possible for us to obtain remission of our sins : not that repentance is any cause of pardon, or any means whereby to satisfy God's justice for our sins : for this Christ hath done already for us, being made a propitiation for our sins, or a propitiatory sacrifice : such as God required in order to their expiation. And we must not think that he now requires repentance of us, to make up any flaw, defect, or insufficiency in the death of Christ : for if his blood could not expiate our sins, how much less can our tears do it ? But howsoever, although our repentance contributes nothing at all towards the meriting pardon and forgiveness at the hands of God ; yet it is that, without which the pardon and forgiveness which Christ hath merited for us, shall never be applied to us. Christ, by his death, hath made our sins all pardonable ; yet so, as that they are never actually pardoned to any one that does not truly repent : as is plain from the many places of Scripture, where repentance is still put before, and necessarily required in order to remission.

Indeed, nothing can be more plain and manifest from the whole tenour both of the Old and New Testament, than that repentance always was, and always will be, indispensably required of mankind ; though not as a cause, yet as a necessary qualification, in order unto pardon. Though there be nothing of causality, nothing of condignity, nothing of merit in it ; yet there is such a congruity and fitness in it, to qualify a man for pardon, that God hath appointed it as the only means whereby to obtain it. Even as it is amongst men : nature, reason, and custom, jointly teach, that if a man hath committed a trespass or injury against his neighbour, he should be sorry for it, ask forgiveness, and faithfully promise to do so no more, before it be pardoned. And it is

upon this easy condition, that Christ commands us to forgive each other ; saying, *If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him ; and if he repent, forgive him,* Luke xvii. 3, 4. And as he would have us to forgive each other, so himself promiseth to forgive us, if we do repent ; not else.

And if your sins can never be pardoned without repentance ; it follows in course, that *except ye repent, ye shall all perish.* For the sins you are guilty of, have obliged you to undergo all the penalty, which by the law of God is due unto them : which is nothing less than eternal ruin and destruction. And unless this your guilt and obligation to punishment be taken off, by having your sins pardoned, you are every moment liable and obnoxious to it. But except you repent, your sins will never be pardoned ; and, by consequence, you must perish for ever.

But I need not have gone so far to have proved this. For, I suppose, you all believe what our Saviour said to be true ; and therefore to be believed, because he said it. But amongst the many divine sayings which proceeded from him, while he was upon earth, this you see was one thing which he expressly affirmed, saying, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* So that was there never another text in all the Scriptures, from whence to infer this truth, this one of itself is sufficient to make it certain and unquestionable to all that profess the Christian faith : especially considering, that he who spake it, was not only infallible, but one that came into the world on purpose to save mankind from perishing. And therefore, it cannot be imagined that he should ever tell them, that *except they repent, they must all perish ;* if it was possible to be kept from perishing, without repentance.

From hence therefore we may infallibly conclude, for a most certain and undeniable truth, that every soul here present, that doth not repent of his sins,

and turn to God, shall inevitably perish, and be condemned to everlasting darkness, horror, and desolation. I speak not this to affright you out of your wits ; but rather, if possible, to bring you into them. I know you all desire not to go to hell, and perish for ever : but, I am sure, it is impossible for you to avoid it without repentance ; seeing Christ himself, by whom alone it is possible for any man to escape eternal damnation, hath told you in as plain terms as he could possibly speak, that, *except ye repent, ye must all likewise perish.*

But if so ; what do ye mean, my brethren, to spend your time, and throw away your short-lived days, upon the impertinencies of this transient world ; and, in the mean while, neglect that great, that necessary, that indispensable work, which lies upon you all to do, or else to perish, and be undone for ever ; even to repent, and turn to God ? What, do you think it possible to have your sins pardoned, or your souls saved without it ? Do you think it possible to escape hell and eternal damnation without it ? Hath not your Saviour himself told you, that *except ye repent, ye must all perish ?* and do you think he spake these words in jest, and meant not what he said when he spake them ? How then can you expect to escape destruction, without repentance, when Christ himself hath told you, you shall not ? No : deceive not yourselves. Never an idle or impertinent, much less any false or unfaithful word, ever proceeded out of his sacred and divine mouth : and therefore you may be confident, that you will all find that he meant as he spake, when he uttered these words ; and, by consequence, that it is impossible for any of you to be preserved from utter ruin and destruction, except you repent sincerely of all your sins, and devote yourselves for the future wholly to the service of Almighty God.

And think not to say within yourselves, that God's

mercies are infinite, and Christ's merits are all-sufficient; for though they be so, as really they are, you will be never the better for it, except you repent. For God will be infinitely merciful, and Christ's merits are all-sufficient to all that do repent, and to none but those that do: and therefore, do not delude yourselves with vain hopes of pardon and salvation, without repentance. For Christ certainly knew better than we can, upon what terms he will preserve any man from perishing: and yet you see, he did not only assert it when he was upon earth, but hath left it upon record for all mankind to read and know, that except they repent he will never save them, but they must inevitably perish for evermore.

By this time, I hope, you are all convinced of the necessity that lies upon you to repent; and therefore are ready to hearken to any motion that shall be made unto you, for the better performance of it. And although, I fear, there may be many here present, who when they have heard a discourse, though upon so necessary a subject, will concern themselves no more about it: yet, I hope, there are some among you that have already resolved within themselves to hazard their salvation no longer; but to set upon the great work of repentance in good earnest, and to do every thing that may be necessary or helpful unto them in it. To such therefore I shall propound one great duty, both as necessary in itself, and as the most effectual means you can possibly use, for the accomplishment of so hard and difficult a work as repentance is; and that is, the duty of fasting. A duty, which the most high God hath frequently enjoined you: a duty which our blessed Saviour ranks with prayer, and alms, directing us how to give our alms, how to pray, and how to fast, at the same time, Matt. vi. which certainly he would never have done, had not he reckoned fasting as ne-

cessary a duty as any of the other. And therefore, as it is a sin never to pray, and a sin never to give alms, so it is a sin likewise never to fast; for it is the continual neglect of a known duty: which, as I have shewn, is inconsistent with true repentance: to which therefore, fasting is in itself so necessary, that, to deal plainly with you, if there be any persons here present, as I fear there are too many, who never yet gave themselves to fasting as well as prayer; I dare assure them, in the name and presence of Almighty God, that they have not yet repented: and therefore had need to look to themselves, for their condition is very desperate.

Especially, considering that fasting is necessary, not only as it is a duty, but likewise as it is the means whereby to work repentance in us. For, in order to repentance, it is necessary that we cast out and avoid all sin, to the utmost of our power. But many sins, you know, especially those that do so easily beset you, are so stubborn and headstrong, that they are like the devils our Saviour speaks of, that cannot be cast out but by prayer and fasting. And I verily believe, that one great reason why many strive against their sins, and cannot conquer them, is, because they do not take this course, even by abstinence and fasting, to subdue the flesh to the spirit. For if that was once done, no sin will be able to stand before you; at least, not so as to domineer and prevail over you. Do but make trial of it, and you will soon find it to be true; and think not yourselves to be above it, or to stand in no need of it; as many in our days do. For I suppose you will all grant me, that St. Paul was as strong in the faith, as eminent a Christian, as any here present at this time; yet he was forced to *keep his body under, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when he had preached unto others, he himself should become a cast-away*, 1 Cor. ix. 27 By this means it was that

St. Paul did it; and by this means it is that we must mortify our lusts, repent, and turn from sin to God, if ever we desire to do it effectually

And, as in order to your thorough repentance, I would advise you to the frequent exercise of this duty; so in order to your speedy repentance, let me beseech you to do it now: now especially, that the church requires it. For as we ought to fast in general, in obedience to God, our heavenly Father; so we ought to fast now, in obedience and conformity to his spouse, the church, which is the mother of us all. For this hath been her constant practice in all ages: insomuch, that till of late days, we never heard of any church in the whole Christian world, but what fasted at this time of the year, or before Easter. And certainly such a custom as this could never have prevailed so, as it hath done in all places and ages since the apostles' days, if there had not been at first very good authority for it; and if Christians had not all along received extraordinary benefit and advantage by it. And if you would but be all persuaded to observe this fast as you ought to do, I do not question but that you also would find it, by the blessing of God, so beneficial to your souls' health, that you will have cause to bless God to all eternity, that you ever lived in a church that required it of you. But for that end you must remember to keep this, and so in all other fasts, aright. Not as the papists, who, abstaining from nothing but flesh, and using all sorts of other the most delicious food and wine, do rather feast than fast in Lent: but you, when you fast, use such abstinence, whereby you may attain the end of fasting, even to bring down the body into subjection to the soul, to make it tame and tractable, fit to receive, patient to endure, and ready to observe the dictates and commands of reason; that the flesh being thus subdued, you may ever obey the motions of God's Holy Spirit in righteousness and true holiness:

which that you may obtain, together with your fasting which fits you for it, you must earnestly pray to Almighty God, that he would be pleased to bestow that measure of his grace and Spirit upon you, as may enable you sincerely to repent, and turn to him: trusting also at the same time, and believing stedfastly on our blessed Saviour for his assistance of you in it; yea, and for his giving true repentance to you. For it is *he that is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins*, Acts v. 31

By the faithful and constant use of these means, appointed by God for that end, there is never a soul here present, but may repent, and become a new creature, so as to have your passions allayed, your lusts subdued, your pride abated, your affections all taken off from all things here below, and fixed only upon God: and by consequence you may all become as humble, as holy, as eminent, for all true grace and virtue, as any of the primitive Christians ever were, or as yourselves are required to be, in order to your preservation from ruin and destruction.

And, oh! that this might be the happy effect of your meeting together at this time! that you would all resolve, by the blessing and assistance of the most high God, to set upon this great work of repenting in good earnest, and never leave, until it be accomplished in you! How happy creatures would you then become! then your former sins would be all pardoned, and your persons justified before God. Then he that made you, would have mercy upon you, and receive you into grace and favour. Then he would give his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. Then whatsoever happens in the world for the punishment of others, you would be still secure under God's protection. Then God would hear the prayers, and grant the petitions you this day put up unto him in behalf of our gracious sove-

reign, and of his forces both by sea and land. Then God would continue to preserve his majesty's sacred person, and to bless him with victory, and all good success. Then he would bless you also with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Then all things would work together for your good; and the whole creation conspire to make you happy. And after a few days more spent in fasting and praying, and doing good upon earth, you would be installed glorified saints in the choir of heaven; where you will live with God, and with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and sing forth his praises for evermore.

Whereas on the other side, if you refuse and rebel; if, notwithstanding all God's threats and promises, you will still continue in your sins without repenting of them; be it known unto you, as God's word is true, you will be destroyed: for it was not I, but Christ himself, that said it with his own mouth, that *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

Yea, by this means, ye may obtain God's favour and blessing not only for yourselves, but the whole nation, in protecting and prospering our gracious sovereign in all his righteous undertakings for the defence of our church and kingdom: *which God, &c.*

SERMON LXXXVIII.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH THE TWO GREAT BRANCHES
OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT.

MARK i. 15.

Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.

THE serpent having no sooner deceived the woman, but it was immediately foretold, that *the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head*; and so the second Adam was promised as soon as the first was fallen: hence the virtue and meritoriousness of his then promised death and passions, commenced as soon as mankind had need of them: all they that lived before his actual coming into the world, being as capable to be saved by him, as we that live after it. But seeing their salvation depended upon their believing in the promise of his coming, God was therefore pleased in all ages to raise up prophets to put them in mind of it, until the thirty-sixth century from the beginning of the world, when the time of his coming drew near, the prophecies all ceased, Malachi being acknowledged by the Jews themselves to have been the last of the prophets. Wherefore he being to seal up all the prophecies that had gone before concerning Christ, he doth not only assure us of the Messiah's coming, but that he should come into the second temple, which then was but new-erected, Mal. iii. 1. Where we may observe, that the Messiah was then suddenly to come, and a mes-

senger was sent to prepare the way before him; with which messenger, or forerunner of the Messiah, the prophet concludes his own, and all other prophecies, saying, in the name of the most high God, *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord*, Mal. iv. 5, 6.

Now the prophecies being all ceased, and concluding with so clear and full a prediction of the coming of Christ the Sun of righteousness, and the Saviour of the world; hence the Jews, to whom these prophecies were particularly revealed, from that time were in a general expectation of him; till about four hundred years more being expired, there appeared a certain mean and abject person among them, called John the Baptist, because he went about preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and baptizing all such as came unto him: and the sum and substance of what he preached to them was, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, Matt. iii. 2. Where, by the kingdom of heaven, we are to understand the Gospel, or the œconomy of the New Testament, which is therefore called a kingdom, because it was to be ordered after the manner of a new-erected kingdom, wherein Christ himself was to be King, all believers his subjects, to be governed with laws and prohibitions, having rewards and punishments annexed to them, suitable to the nature of this kingdom; which is called the kingdom of heaven, because it was originally established in heaven, and to be governed after an heavenly and spiritual manner. It requires heavenly duties, and promiseth heavenly rewards; and though it be begun in this, it is perfected and consummated in the world to come, in the eternal kingdom of heaven there. This kingdom Daniel spake of, Dan. vii. 13, 14. John saith was now at hand, because the Messiah, the founder and head of it, was now very suddenly to be revealed: and therefore he calls upon all to repent;

Repent, saith he, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. But why did John make repentance the only subject of his preaching? The reason was, because he was sent before to prepare the way for the Lord, according to the prophecies of Isaiah, ch. xl. 3. and Malachi, ch. iii. 1. and iv. 6. and the prediction of the angel, Luke i. 16, 17. But there was no way for him to prepare mankind for the reception of the Messiah, but by exhorting and calling upon them to repent, both of their former superstitions, and wicked lives; for unless they were convinced of their former errors, they would never embrace the truth; and unless they were convinced of and humbled for their sins, they would never go to Christ for pardon: and therefore he saith, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Making the approach of the Messiah the reason why they should repent; because by him, if they do repent, they may be pardoned; but without repentance, they could have no part or portion in his kingdom.

But the Jews being now big with the expectation of the promised Messiah, as of one that should reign over all the world, and deliver them from the Roman bondage, and restore them to their former liberty; as may be gathered from heathenish, as well as Christian and Jewish writers: hence they hearing John speak so much of a kingdom being at hand, they flocked about him, and were baptized of him. Although his calling it all along the kingdom of heaven, did clearly intimate, that it was not to be of this world, nor such a kingdom as they looked for: howsoever, they could not but long much to see this kingdom he spake of come, and therefore were baptized of him, confessing their sins in order to it; until at length being fully convinced that John himself was sent from God, they began to suspect him to be the person they looked for: but that he utterly denied, John i. 19, 20. but assures them, that *he*

whom they looked for was coming after him, being much mightier than himself, Mark i. 7

John the Baptist having thus prepared the way, at length Jesus of Nazareth comes amongst others to be baptized of him; whom John conjectured at first sight to be the Christ; as appears from his saying to him, *I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?* Matt. iii. 14 But afterwards he was thoroughly assured of it, when he saw the *Spirit of God descending from heaven like a dove, and abiding upon him*, John i. 31, 32. Jesus therefore being thus baptized by John, and known to him first to be the Christ; after forty days fasting in the wilderness, he begins to preach the Gospel, as Moses had promulged the Law after forty days fasting in the mount. And the first thing that he acquainted the world withal was, that the kingdom which John had told them of was now come. *The time, saith he, is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand*: that is, the time which was so long ago foretold by the prophets, and hath been so long looked for by you, it is now expired, it is now fulfilled, for the kingdom which you expect is at hand; I am come to lay the foundation of it, and settle it in the world. And having told them this, he acquaints them, that there are two duties, which now they must necessarily perform: the one, the same which John before had taught them, even *repent*: the other, that which they never before had heard of, even *believe the Gospel*: believe the glad tidings which he then brought, of pardon and salvation through his blood; *repent*, saith he, *and believe the Gospel*.

Which being the first command which our blessed Saviour laid upon mankind after he had taken upon him the office of Mediator for them; we, who expect happiness and salvation by him, cannot surely look upon it but as a matter of more than ordinary importance, to understand the full meaning and purport of these

words: especially, considering that if we take them in their largest extent, as he questionless intended them, they comprehend whatsoever he requires of us, in order to our partaking of the kingdom of God. So that if we do but *repent and believe the Gospel*, in the sense wherein he commands us to do it, we need not fear, but in and through him we shall be invested with as great glory and happiness, as our natures are capable of. Hence therefore I shall endeavour, by his assistance who spake them, to search out and explain unto you the true and genuine sense of these words, or what it is which our Saviour would have us to do, when he saith, *Repent, and believe the Gospel*. Taking them therefore as they lie in order: the first thing our blessed Saviour here enjoins us is, *to repent*; which being the first thing here required of us, we must have a great care, lest we be mistaken in the true notion of it, as many in the world have been, and are still. But seeing our Saviour doth not only here command us to repent, but elsewhere tells us in plain terms, *that except we repent, we must all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 3. it must needs be a matter of the greatest consequence imaginable, rightly to understand the nature of this duty: for though we may know it, and yet not do it; yet be sure we cannot do it, unless we know it. And therefore, that you may not err in a business of such importance as this is, I shall make it the work of this day, by the blessing of God, to shew you what really it is which our Saviour means, when he saith, *Repent*. For which end it will be necessary,

In the first place, to consider the word which our blessed Saviour expresses this duty by, which, in the language our Saviour spake these words in, was **εὐσολ**, *Return ye*; but in the Greek, wherein his sayings are infallibly conveyed to us, it is *μετανοεῖτε*, which word, according to its proper etymology and notation, as well as the common use of it both in sacred and profane writers, doth properly signify

the changing of the mind, and that usually from worse to better. And thus the author of the questions ascribed to Athanasius explains τὸν μετανοεῖν, by μετατίθεσθαι τὸν νοῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθόν; the changing of the mind from bad to good. And therefore Lactantius and others after him do rightly expound the Greek, μετάνοια, by the Latin, *resipiscencia*; which properly signifies, the recovering one's self from some error which we were overtaken with: for he that repenteth of his error, *resipiscit*, is of another mind; that is, as the aforesaid father interprets it, *Mentem suam quaque ab insania recipit*: he recovers his mind, as it were, out of his former madness.

Thus our Saviour expresses the repentance of the prodigal son by coming to himself, Luke xv. 17 implying, that before that he had been besides himself, not in his right mind; but now he came to himself, and to the right use of his sense and reason, so as to be quite another thing, and of another and better mind than he was before.

This therefore being the true meaning of the word here used, it is easy to gather the true notion of the thing expressed by it. For first it is plain that our Saviour intended no such thing, as the Papists would wrest from these words, translating μετανοεῖτε, by *pœnitentiam agite*; and so would make the world, or at least their own credulous people, believe that our Saviour here enjoins us to do penance, (for so in their English translation they render the word;) that is, in their notion, to make satisfaction to God for the sins we have committed, by some external punishment inflicted upon our bodies, either of our own accord, or else by the command of the priest, to whom we confess them. And this is that which they call, *The sacrament of penance*: although if we take it in their own sense, yet there is neither any word of institution or command enjoining such a sacrament; nor yet is there any outward sign, to represent any invisible grace with it:

both which are absolutely necessary to the constitution of a sacrament. And besides that, to speak of making satisfaction to Almighty God for the sins we have committed against him, by undergoing only some outward chastisements for them, is such a piece of monstrous, if not blasphemous absurdity, that none can believe in Christ, and not tremble, to hear it asserted by them that profess to do so. For this is not only to derogate from the satisfaction which Christ himself hath made for us with his own most precious blood, as if it was not sufficient of itself without our adding something to it; but it makes as if our sins and rebellion against the great Creator and Governor of the world himself were such little inconsiderable offences against him, that he cannot but in justice accept of a little corporal or pecuniary punishment, as a sufficient recompence and satisfaction for them. As if we could raze out our sins out of the book of God's remembrance, by whipping and scourging our own bodies; buy them off with a little money; or run from them, by going on pilgrimage to some saint or image; as if the outward punishments of finite creatures, could bear any proportion with the sins committed against an infinite God. I am sure the prophet was of another mind, when he said, *Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God, &c.* Mic. vi. 6, 7, 8. And therefore, it is not our garments or our bodies, but our hearts, that he commands us to rend, Joel ii. 13.

It is true, I do not deny, but that some outward expressions of our inward repentance may be both well pleasing to God, and very useful to ourselves, to raise in us an higher detestation of those sins for which we can never sufficiently abhor ourselves. Thus by the foresaid prophet God calls upon the people, saying, *Turn ye even to me, saith the Lord, with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping,*

and with mourning, Joel ii. 12. Thus Job abhorred himself, and *repented in dust and ashes*, Job xlii. 6. Thus the king of Nineveh, with all his people, upon the preaching of Jonah, *fasted, put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes*, Jon. iii. 6, 7. But all these external actions are only the effects of true repentance, not of the nature or essence of it; for a man may do all these things, and yet not repent; and a man may repent, and yet do none of them. And though they are certainly acceptable unto God when joined with repentance; yet without it they cannot but be very odious and abominable to him, as proceeding only from hypocrisy and deceit. And yet such external chastisements as these, joined with a little pretended contrition, is all that the popish confessors require of their penitents, as they call them. in order to their giving full and complete absolution from all their sins, as if they had done whatsoever God required of them in order to their pardon.

But, blessed be God, we have better learned Christ: and therefore, though we cannot but acknowledge that fasting is of great use towards a true repentance and thorough conversion of ourselves to God; not fasting upon fish, and wine, and sweetmeats, as the papists do; but as St. Paul did, by keeping our bodies under, and bringing them into subjection, 1 Cor. ix. 27 yet this, howsoever commendable in itself, and beneficial to them that rightly use it, is not that which our Saviour here enjoins under the name of repentance; though it may be the product or consequent of it, and reckoned among those which John Baptist calls *the fruits of repentance*, Matt. iii. 8. But the repentance itself, which our blessed Saviour here speaks of, is seated only in the mind; as appears from the word itself, μετανοεῖτε, a word derived from μετά et νοῦς, the mind, and so hath respect only to the inward motions of the soul, not at all to the outward actions of the body, any farther than as they

depend upon, and are regulated by, the mind and will. So that if we speak of repentance in its proper notion, it is certainly nothing else but the recovering our minds out of our former folly and distraction about the things of this world, into such a frame and disposition, as to be wholly averse from sin and evil, and inclined only to God and goodness. This is properly *μετάνοια*, the changing our minds from evil to good.

Hence therefore it is easy to observe, that in repentance, properly so called, there are two things to be considered, as indeed in all motions and changes whatsoever, the *terminus a quo*, and the *terminus ad quem*; that which the mind turns from, and that which it turns to. That which it turns from, is sin and error; that which it turns to, is goodness and truth; and, by consequence, God, the fountain, centre, and perfection of them. Thus the Psalmist describes repentance, by *departing from evil, and doing good*, Psal. xxxiv. 14. And the prophet, by *ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well*, Isa. i. 16, 17.

That therefore you may understand the whole nature of repentance, we shall consider both the integral and essential parts of it: whereof the first is, the aversion of our whole souls from sin and evil: for here, as elsewhere in Scripture, by the mind, we are to understand the whole soul, with all its powers and faculties; which by our fall in Adam were so disordered, that they are naturally inclined to such things as they ought to be averse from, and averse from such things as they ought to be inclined to. Now the taking off the bent and inclinations of our souls to sin and evil, is the first part of that duty which our Saviour here commands us, under the name of repentance. For the right performance whereof, there are these following particulars required.

First, it is necessary that our minds be possessed with a due sense of our manifold sins and miscar-

riages since we came into the world ; as also of the guilt that we have contracted by them ; so as to look every man upon himself as the greatest sinner in the world, being thoroughly convinced of the evil of his own ways. Neither is it enough that you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in general ; but in order to your repentance it is necessary that you be sensible of those particular crimes which you know yourselves to be guilty of. As David was, when he said, *I acknowledge mine iniquity, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*, Psal. li. 3, 4. Neither yet is it sufficient that you are sensible of some particular sins, but it must be of all that you can remember you have committed ; whether sins of omission, or sins of commission ; whether sins of ignorance, or sins of wilfulness ; whether open or secret sins ; whether sins against the Law, or sins against the Gospel : and in the Law, whether sins against the first, or sins against the second table ; and that too, whether in thought, word, or action. And surely, there is none of you but must needs be sensible that you have many a time and often offended in some, if not most or all these ways against the most high God that made you, whereby you have all incurred his displeasure, and deserved the severest of his wrath to be poured forth upon you. And this is the first step to true repentance ; which should lead you,

In the second place, to a godly sorrow, and hearty contrition, for those sins which you are thus conscious to yourselves that you have committed. Not such a sorrow as you have for the loss of relations, or for crosses and vexations in the world ; but from quite different motives and principles, even because you by them have offended so glorious a God, displeased so gracious a Father, broken so righteous a law, abused the mercies of God himself, and so are

liable to his wrath and indignation for ever. Thus the penitent prodigal went unto his father, and said, *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son*, Luke xv. 21. Job xlii. 5, 6. And David, *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*; in the place before quoted. Thus, nothing should come so near our hearts, nothing should lie so heavy upon our spirits, nothing should be so vexatious and tormenting to us, as to consider what howels of mercy we have spurned against; what a great and glorious, what a good and gracious God we have affronted, and so incensed against us; how ungrateful wretches we have been to him, *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*. Which should make the remembrance of our sins so grievous to us, and the burden so intolerable, that we should be ready every moment to sink under it, but that we are supported by the consideration of his mercies and merits, whom we have offended. This is sorrow for sin indeed: which, by consequence, must not be measured by the external expressions of it, as by tears or weeping, which are ordinarily moved more by external objects, than by such a kind of grief as is required in repentance; which may be, and often is, exerted in the soul without any bodily expression of it: forasmuch as it is wholly the work of the mind, which may be sometimes overwhelmed in itself, without the body's being any ways affected with it. Yea, commonly we see, the more inward any grief is, the less it appears outwardly; and the greater it is in itself, the less it is seen by others. Thus David, at the death of Absalom, cried out, *O Absalom, my son, my son; would to God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!* 2 Sam. xviii. 33. But we never find him using any such extraordinary passionate expressions about his sins; though questionless he was infinitely more grieved for his

sins against God than he was for the loss of his son. Which I therefore mention, because many that truly fear God, may be apt to suspect their repentance merely upon this account; because their grief for sin is not expressed with such external passions as they desire, as others seem to be. For this is no rule at all: but you must rather consult your own judgments and inclinations in the case. And if you find, that upon mature deliberation, you had rather for the future suffer the greatest affliction, than willingly commit the least sin; whether your grief for your former sins be accompanied with such sensible passions or no, you may conclude it to be sincere: for if you was not really troubled for your former sins, you would not be so fearful of sinning for the future.

And this is the last thing required to this, the first part of our repentance: even that as we are convinced of, and humbled for our sins; so we must be stedfastly resolved against them, and to the utmost of our power and knowledge leave and forsake them. And let me tell you, although sorrow for past sins be absolutely necessary to a true repentance; yet it is not repentance itself, as the apostle plainly shews, saying, *for godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of*, 2 Cor. vii. 10. And if godly sorrow work repentance, whatsoever influence it may have upon it, it must needs be distinct from it. Neither can that repentance, which needs not to be repented of, be any thing less than an hearty detestation of a stedfast resolution against a sincere conversion from whatsoever we know to be sinful, or contrary to the laws of God. And whatsoever comes short of this, how specious and plausible soever it may appear, it is but a mock repentance; that is, it is no repentance at all.

But seeing it is so dangerous to mistake in a matter of such consequence as this is, and yet nothing

is more common than to be mistaken in it ; I shall endeavour more fully and plainly to shew, that the repentance which our blessed Saviour here enjoins, consists in nothing less than a sincere forsaking of all known sin, unto the utmost of our power : for although it be impossible for a man to repent of his sins, if he be not first convinced of them, and humbled for them ; yet it is possible and common for men to be both convinced of, and humbled for their sins, and yet not truly repent. Pharaoh could say, *I have sinned*, Exod. ix. 27. Balaam could say, *I have sinned*, Numb. xxii. 34. Saul could say, *I have sinned*, 1 Sam. xv. 24. Yea, Judas himself, when he had betrayed his Master, could say, *I have sinned*, Matt. xxvii. 4. Which confessions could not proceed but from an inward conviction, in their own consciences, that they were guilty of those sins which they were confessing, and yet were far enough as yet from true repentance. Thus also we read, how when Elijah the prophet had convinced Ahab of his sins, and told him the judgments which would be laid upon him for them ; he humbled himself so, *that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly*, 1 Kings xxi. 27. Yet it doth not follow that he truly repented of his sins, being rather troubled at the judgments God had threatened against him, than for the sins himself had committed against God ; and so he was rather *humiliatus* than *humilis*, rather humbled by God, than in himself. And so far the greatest hypocrite in the world may go, and yet remain an hypocrite still ; as far from repentance as they that never pretended to it. And if this was all the repentance that God requires of us, *the way would not be so narrow, nor the gate so strait that leads to life*, as our Saviour himself says it is. If whipping our bodies would save our souls, or scourging our backs would mortify our sins, or going barefoot was

the way to go to heaven, none but fools and madmen would be kept out ; nothing being more easy than to perform such external actions out of pride or hypocrisy, and yet continue in sin still. But do not mistake yourselves ; repentance is another kind of thing than this is : for it consists not in the correcting of the body, but the mind. It is *μετάνοια*, the changing of our minds from evil to good, from sin to holiness, from the world to God. Thus Christ himself describes it, and thus you and I must practise it, if ever we desire to come to heaven. You must not content yourselves with being a little grieved now and then for your sins : but if you would repent in good earnest, you must cut off your right hand, pluck out your right eye, and cast them from you ; that is, you must hate your beloved sins, and be as much averse from them, as ever heretofore you have been inclined to them. For it is in this that the very essence of true repentance doth consist, even in your minds and hearts being taken off from sin, and fixed upon God.

From which notion of repentance there are two things easy to be gathered ; which I desire you to take special notice of, because they may be of extraordinary use, both to your clearer understanding of the true nature of repentance, and also to your comfort and direction in the practice of it. Whereof the first is this : that seeing repentance doth properly consist in the mind, and its averseness from the evil which before it was bent upon ; hence it necessarily follows, both that a man may leave many of the sins that he before lived in, and yet not repent ; and, secondly, on the other side, that a man may truly repent, and yet sometimes fall into sin too. First, I say, it follows from hence, that a man may leave off many of those sins which before he indulged himself in, and yet not truly repent of them. For repentance being seated principally in the mind,

unless that be altered, whatsoever alteration there may be in the life and conversation, yet there can be nothing of true repentance in it. For, as the lopping off several branches from a tree, doth not necessarily kill the root ; so neither doth the leaving off our former sins, as to the outward commission of them, necessarily infer, that the root from whence they sprang, even our inward lusts and corruptions, are at all mortified : but the heart may be as much inclined to them as ever, although the hands may be so tied, as not to be able to commit them. **As** for example : a man that hath lived a long while in drunkenness, whoredom, or the like, and afterwards falling into some sharp distemper, he cannot gratify his flesh any more with such sensual pleasures ; but it doth not therefore follow that he hath repented of them : for though he cannot if he would, yet he would, perhaps, if he could do it, now as much as ever. So supposing any of you, in your younger days, have used some unlawful means to get or increase your estates ; and having now, by that means, gotten as much as you think sufficient, you leave off your former course of life, and by consequence the sins that you then allowed yourselves in : but do you think, that this is repenting of them ? By no means. For your heart may still be the same as ~~it~~ was before : and if you had the same occasions and temptations now, as you had then, you might be as apt to fall into the same sins as you were before. And therefore, let me advise you to have a care of cheating yourselves in a matter of such moment as this is, so as to make yourselves believe you have repented, when in truth you have not. For howsoever reformed you may be in your lives, unless your hearts be reformed too, I should be a false prophet, should I tell you, that you have repented at all. And therefore, your chief care must be to get your hearts and affections renewed and changed, and

then the reformation of your lives will follow in course. Do but clean the fountain, and the streams will soon run clear. But never think that you have repented of any sin, merely because you do not commit it now, as heretofore you used to do; but rather consider which way your pulse beats, and whether your hearts be still inclined to it or no, and whether you find your hearts so changed from it, that you hate it now, as much as ever you loved it; that you abhor it now as much as ever you did desire it; and that you are as really grieved for it now, as ever heretofore you took pleasure in it. And until you find such an alteration in your minds, let no alteration whatsoever in your lives fool you into a groundless persuasion, that you have repented; for I assure you, you have not.

And then, in the second place, as a man may leave off some of his sins, and yet not repent of them; so, on the other side, a man may have repented of his sins, and yet sometimes fall into them. For repentance being seated in the mind, although that may be so changed, that its general bent and inclination is towards God; yet that change not being absolutely perfect in this life, there is no man, how penitent soever he be, but may sometimes slip into sin, either by surprise and inadvertency, or else by being overpowered with the violence of some prevailing temptation; as is easy to be observed in most, if not all the saints that are recorded in holy Scripture; especially in David and Peter: the first whereof did not only commit most horrible and atrocious crimes, but did it too with choice and deliberation; and the latter, St. Peter, was so overcome with fear at our Saviour's being apprehended, that he did not only deny him, but did it with oaths and curses; which was so dreadful a sin, that he, knowing his love to Christ, thought it before impossible he should fall into it, as appears from his

peremptory asserting, that *though all should be offended because of Christ, yet he would never be offended; yea*, saith he, *though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*, Matt. xxvi. 33, 35. And verily it is no wonder : for our repentance being but imperfect whilst we are here below, though many so commit sin, as never to repent of it ; yet there is none can so repent of sin, as never to commit it. Many have all sin, and no grace ; but there is none hath all grace, and no sin. Many have no spirit to war against the flesh ; but there is none but have flesh to war against the spirit. And therefore, although in a true penitent the spirit for the most part hath the better ; yet it is no wonder if the flesh, assisted by Satan. by some stratagem or other doth sometimes conquer.

But yet it is to be observed, that although he whose mind is so changed, that he may properly be said to have repented, may notwithstanding relapse sometimes into his former sins ; yet it is ordinarily with that reluctancy and unwilling willingness, as I may so call it, that impenitent persons are altogether strangers to. And although it cannot be denied, but a truly pious man may have some sin which may be said to reign within him, because of the power and prevalency it may have over him ; yet be sure it doth not reign as a king, but as a tyrant and usurper, having no rest or quiet, but it is always molested and disturbed, or at least resisted and opposed, so that its commands are never observed, without either fraud or violence being used. For no man can be said to have repented truly, but he whose mind, heart, and affections, are turned from his sins to God : and therefore, although such a one may sometimes stumble in his walk to heaven, be sure he will soon get up again, and walk with more care for the future, and with circumspection. For whatsoever infirmities or miscarriages a sincere penitent may

be guilty of, none can deserve that glorious title, but he whose mind is so changed from what it was, that he truly hates the evil which once he loved, and truly loves the good too which once he hated. And this brings me to the other part of repentance, even that whereby the mind is changed to that which is truly good, as well as from that which is truly evil.

But here give me leave to observe, that this cannot so properly be called another part of repentance, as another respect only under which repentance may be considered; which I have shewn is the reforming or changing of the mind from evil to good. But if it be changed from evil, it must needs be changed to good; it being evil not to be good. But howsoever, we may consider repentance, as it hath respect to good as well as evil. And so, certainly, as he who truly repents, cannot but be averse from whatsoever is evil, upon that very account, because it is evil; so he cannot but be inclined to whatsoever is good, upon that very account, because it is good. And therefore, as such a one would not willingly commit any known sin, so neither would he willingly omit any known duty: he will not only forsake whatsoever is offensive unto God, but he will perform whatsoever he knows to be pleasing to him; being now as much averse from sin, and inclined to God, as he was ever before averse from God, and inclined to sin. Thus the prophet shews exactly, how a wicked man should repent, saying, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord*, Isa. lv. 7. And the prophet Joel, *Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God*, Joel ii. 13. It is not enough to rend your hearts both for and from our sins, but we must also turn unto the Lord our God, so as to love the Lord with all our might and mind; and in obedience to him, to love our neighbour as ourselves. So that, in plain terms,

repentance contains under it all the duties of the moral law; and whatsoever that enjoins us, either to God or man, our Saviour commands us to observe in this one word, *repent*.

Having thus explained the true nature and notion of the duty here enjoined, we may consider in the next place, what was the reason wherefore our Saviour here puts repentance before faith, commanding us first to *repent*, and then to *believe* the Gospel. To that I answer in brief thus: our blessed Saviour had now taken upon him the office of Mediator betwixt God and man, to reconcile God to them, and them to God; and by consequence to be a propitiation for their sins, by making satisfaction to God's justice: by which means mankind is in and through him become capable of having their sins pardoned, and their persons accepted before God. This therefore was that great mystery, which upon his first entering upon his office he was to make known to us. But repentance being always required as necessary to our obtaining this mercy promised in the Gospel, even the pardon of our sins; hence it was necessary that our blessed Saviour should first press this upon us, without which we cannot partake of the benefits and privileges which he hath purchased for us, and revealed to us in the Gospel. For all the promises of pardon were still made with this proviso, that we first repent: as, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon*, Isa. lv. 7. And again, *Repent, and turn yourselves from your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin*, Ezek. xviii. 30. And so in many places. From whence it appears, that though there be nothing of condignity or merit in repentance, whereby it can deserve pardon at God's hand; yet God doth absolutely require it of us, in order to his

pardoning our sins, because without this we are not rightly qualified for so great a mercy as this is ; there being all the reason in the world, that he that hath done an injury should acknowledge his fault, be sorry for it, ask forgiveness, and promise amendment for the future, before he be pardoned.

Repentance therefore being so indispensably required, in order to our pardon ; Christ, when he came to purchase and seal our pardon with his own blood, thought it necessary to acquaint us beforehand upon what terms we are to expect it, even if we do repent. Hence he sent John the Baptist before him to preach, and say, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. And when himself appeared publicly in the world, the first thing that he calls upon us to do is to *repent*, and then to *believe the Gospel* ; that is, first to *repent*, and then to *believe* that in and through him we shall be pardoned. From whence we may observe, that we can have no ground to expect pardon, unless we repent ; as considering, that although it is not for our repentance that we shall ever be pardoned, yet we shall never be pardoned without it. There is no such virtue in our penitential tears, as to wash away either the guilt or filth of sin ; there is nothing but the blood of Christ can do it : and yet the blood of Christ will never do it neither, unless we do repent. Not as if our repentance could add any virtue unto Christ's blood ; but because the virtue of Christ's blood is neither imparted nor imputed without repentance. And hence it is, that our blessed Saviour here first commands us to repent of our sins, and then to believe in the Gospel for the pardon of them : *Repent*, saith he, *and believe the Gospel*.

Which things being duly considered, I hope I need use no other arguments to persuade you all to repent. For first, I suppose there are none of you here present, but must needs be conscious to your-

selves of the manifold and great transgressions you have committed against the most high and mighty God, the only Creator and Governor of the world; by which means you have incensed his wrath against you, and are every moment obnoxious to the dismal consequences and effects of it: yea, by reason of your sins, you are all obliged to undergo nothing less than eternal torments. And therefore one would think, you should be all so apprehensive of the danger you are in upon the account of your sins, as to desire nothing in the world so much as to have them pardoned, and so your obligations to punishment cancelled and taken off. And let me tell you for your comfort, that howsoever great and many your former sins have been, yet in and through Christ they may all be pardoned. But let me tell you withal, that howsoever few and small your sins may seem to be, yet none of them shall ever be pardoned unless you repent. Christ's arms are ready to receive you, if you do repent; but if you do not, whatsoever he hath done and suffered for mankind, will stand you in no stead. And therefore, as ever you desire that he that made you would have mercy upon you, you must be sure to perform what he that redeemed you requires of you, even to repent.

But if such considerations as these are will not excite and stir you up to repent, consider in the next place how many obligations the eternal God hath laid upon you to repent; having linked your duty and interest so together, that as there is nothing can be more advantageous to you than repentance, so there is nothing that you are or can be more strictly obliged to perform. All the promises that he hath made unto you; all the threatenings he hath denounced against you; all the mercies he hath entrusted with you; all the judgments he hath laid upon you; all the truths that he hath revealed unto you; and all the commands that he hath en-

joined you; they all jointly and severally call upon you, and oblige you to repent: so that in all these, as the apostle tells you, *the goodness of God leadeth you to repentance*, Rom. ii. 4. For what should make him so earnest with you to repent, as the Scriptures shew him all along to be, but his own infinite and intrinsic goodness and mercy to you? What! doth he need your repentance? or will he receive any additions of glory from your services? No: be it known unto you, he is infinitely happy in himself, without any thing that you can do. His glory is not eclipsed by your misery, nor advanced by your happiness. He loses nothing by your rebellions against, nor gains any thing by the services you can do and perform unto him. It is all one as to him and his felicity, whether you repent or no. And therefore he might justly suffer you to go on in your sins, without ever minding you of them, or calling you from them. But howsoever, as he is your Maker, he had rather exalt his mercy in saving, than his justice in condemning you; and therefore saith, yea sweareth by himself, *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Ezék. xxxiii. 11. How is it possible for one man to use more pathetical expressions with another, than here the eternal God uses to you? and all to shew how earnestly he desires you would all repent, that he might pardon and make you happy. For this end it is, that he sometimes terrifies you with his judgments, that he might affright you from your sins; and sometimes allure you with his mercies into the embracement of holiness. For this reason it is, that he hath annexed so many dreadful threatenings against the breakers of his law, and so many gracious promises to them that keep it. For this reason it is, that he hath given you his word to instruct you, his ordinances to direct

you, and his sacraments to confirm you in your repentance. For this reason it is, that he still continues your lives unto you, that you might devote them to him in whom you live.

In a word, for this end it is that he sent his Son to die for you, his Spirit to live within you, and me at this time to call upon you to repent. And if after all this you will still continue in your sins, and refuse to repent and turn unto the Lord your God, your blood be upon your own heads, for your destruction is from yourselves.

But if by any means I may be so happy, as to be an instrument in God's hand to persuade you all to perform what is here enjoined ; let me desire you in the last place to consider, who it is who here commands you to repent : even no other person, but he who came to earth on purpose to shew you the way to heaven ; yea, and laid down his own life to redeem yours : and therefore you may be sure, that he commands you nothing but what is really for your good. And if there had been any other way in the world to make you happy, questionless he would not have been so positive and peremptory in commanding you to repent ; yea, so as to make this the first of all the commands he lays upon you. Neither hath he only commanded you to repent, but hath told you in plain terms, that unless *you do repent, you must all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 3.

In his name therefore, give me leave to speak freely to you all. I know you all desire to be happy, and I hope you all expect to be so only by Jesus Christ. Now you have heard this day, what this very person requireth of you in order to your salvation, even to repent ; and hath told you, you can never be saved, unless you do it : tell me therefore, how can you expect that he would save you, unless you do that, without which, himself assures you that he will never save you, but you must inevitably

perish? and therefore, as any of you tender the salvation of your immortal souls, let me advise and beseech you, in his name, to break off your former sins by repentance and conversion unto God. And think not to say within yourselves, that God is infinitely merciful, and Christ's merits are all-sufficient; for though they be so, you will never be the better for it, unless you repent, and be converted. And therefore, have a care of yourselves, put not off this work any longer, as heretofore you have done; give no rest to your eyes, nor slumber to your eye-lids, until you be truly humbled for, and stedfastly resolved against, your sins, all your sins, howsoever pleasing or profitable they have hitherto been unto you: so as for the future, by the assistance of God's grace and Spirit, to walk in all the commandments of God blameless to the utmost of your power; and to exercise yourselves to have always a conscience void of offence, both to God and man. Do this, and then you will have but one step to heaven; and that is, to believe the Gospel.

SERMON LXXXIX.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH THE TWO GREAT BRANCHES
OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT.

MARK i. 15.

And believe the Gospel.

THE only reason why the Son of God came down to earth, being only to make way for the sons of men to go up to heaven, and to direct them to get thither : hence we must needs conclude, that as whatsoever he did or suffered, so likewise whatsoever he said whilst here, was some way or other in order to the carrying on, and accomplishing, the greater end which he came into the world about. For as by his sufferings he hath made a way for us, so by his sayings he hath directed us how to walk in that way to heaven. And whatsoever he intended afterwards to say upon this subject, he was pleased at the first entrance upon his ministry to give us the sum and substance of it in these words, *Repent, and believe the Gospel.* For certainly there is nothing elsewhere taught by Christ, or necessary to be done by us, in order to our attaining everlasting happiness, but it may be easily reduced to, and is most clearly comprised under, these words. And hence it is, that as our Saviour began his ministry with these words, so did he end it too with words to the same effect. For as when he first made his public entrance into the world, himself preached, saying, *Repent, and believe*

the Gospel; so likewise, immediately before he left the world, in the last words that he spake to his disciples, he told them, that *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name*, Luke xxiv. 47. But remission of sins in and through Christ, is the sum of all the Gospel. And therefore, our Saviour here enjoins his apostles to follow the same method in preaching, which he himself had done before them; even to preach *repentance*, and then *remission of sins in his name*; that is, to exhort and call upon people to *repent, and believe the Gospel*.

The apostles therefore having received this order and commission from their Lord and Master, Christ; accordingly, when the people said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Peter said unto them, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins*, Acts ii. 38. As if he should have said, If you would needs know what you must do that you may be saved, first *repent*; and then, that your repentance may be accepted, *believe the Gospel, and be baptized in the name of Christ, for the remission of those sins which you have repented of*. Thus also it was that St. Paul preached the Gospel; for he himself tells us, that *he testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*, Acts xx. 21. From whence it is plain and obvious, that these two were the general heads, which both our Saviour himself, and his apostles, by his order and commission, insisted on in their preaching of the Gospel, even *repentance, and faith in Christ*.

Now from this connection of these two graces together, in the preaching of the Gospel, we may observe three things: whereof the first is, that under the Gospel itself, repentance is indispensably necessary to salvation. And therefore, we must not think that Christ so died for sin, that we might still live in

it; or that the Gospel gives any encouragement in the world to vice and wickedness. No: it is so far from that, that the first duty that our blessed Saviour ever enjoined mankind, was to repent, and reform their lives. And the Holy Ghost assures us, that Christ was sent on purpose *to bless us, by turning every one of us from our iniquities*, Acts iii. 26. *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. *So that the grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men in the Gospel*, as the apostle tells us; *teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*, Tit. ii. 11, 12. *Yea, Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, ver. 14. *Yea* farther, the same apostle elsewhere tells us, that those *times of ignorance* before Christ's coming, *God winked at*; that is, looked over them; not regarding them so much as to acquaint them with the Gospel, and to call them to repentance, as the word there used, *ὑπερίδων*, properly signifies: but now, saith he, *he commandeth all men every where to repent*, Acts xvii. 30. So that the Gospel lays greater obligations upon us to repent, than ever the Law did, in that it offers us greater assistances, presents us with greater examples, and affords us greater encouragements; assuring us, that in and through Christ, the sins which we repent of may be pardoned, and the good works we perform, accepted before God. And if, after all such extraordinary overtures of grace and mercy as are made to us in the Gospel, we still continue in our sins; certainly it will be far more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for us. And therefore, do not think that Christ will patronize or connive at any of your sins which you live in; or that he will save you, whether you repent or no.

No: he himself hath told you beforehand that he will not; and therefore you may be assured of it, and conclude with yourselves, that whatsoever Christ hath done and suffered for mankind, you will have no part nor portion in him, unless you repent; yea, so repent, as to be for the future as much averse from sin, and inclined to holiness, as ever heretofore you have been averse from holiness, and inclined to sin: so as to avoid whatsoever you know to be sinful, and to the utmost of your power walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless.

Secondly, from this connection of faith and repentance, in the preaching of the Gospel, I observe also, that although repentance be absolutely necessary to salvation, yet it will avail us nothing without faith: which I therefore observe, because as some attribute all to faith, as if repentance was not at all required now; so others attribute all to repentance, as if faith was of no use in the Gospel itself; or at least, as if it was to be confounded with repentance, or repentance with it. Whereas nothing can be more plain, than that our Saviour himself, and his apostles after him, make a distinction betwixt repentance and faith, and yet make them both too absolutely necessary to our obtaining the privileges of the Gospel. But not to enter into disputes here: that man must be strangely possessed with prejudices against believing, and the Gospel too, that asserts or thinks, that repentance, or obedience to the moral law, is sufficient to bring a soul to heaven, without *believing in the Gospel*. For this is not only to trample upon the blood of Christ, and make it of none effect; but it is also directly opposite to the words of our Saviour in my text, wherein he expressly requires us to *believe in the Gospel*, as well as to *repent*. Yea, it is against the whole tenor of the Gospel, making as if it was nothing else but the moral law refined, and enforced with stronger argu-

ments, and greater obligations to obedience, than it was before: whereas nothing can be more plain than that the Gospel doth most clearly and strictly require faith in Christ, over and above whatsoever is commanded or enjoined in the moral law. For thus, when the ruler came to our Saviour, saying, *Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Jesus directed him to keep the commandments; saying, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* The ruler replied, that this he had done from his youth: *All these things, saith he, have I kept from my youth,* Matt. xix. 20. Luke xviii. 21. But was this all which was needful for him to do? No, saith our Saviour, *Yet lackest thou one thing:* and what was that? *Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and come and follow me,* Luke xviii. 22. where we may observe, that the one thing he lacked was to go to Christ, and follow him; which seeing he could not do, until his heart and affections were loosed from the world, he therefore bids him sell all things, and so manifest his repentance for his former covetousness by his future charity, *and then to follow him.* So that our Saviour here gives the same advice to the young man, which in my text he gives to all; even first, *to repent, and keep all the commandments;* and then, *to believe the Gospel, or follow Christ.* And if the former would have been sufficient without the latter, certainly our Saviour would never have told him that he lacked one thing, notwithstanding he had kept the commandments of God. Another instance of the like nature we have in Cornelius, whom the Holy Ghost affirms himself to have been *a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house; which gave much alms to the poor, and prayed to God alway,* Acts x. 2. insomuch that God himself was pleased to send an angel to acquaint him in a vision, *that his prayers and his alms were come up for a memorial before God,* ver. 4. From which testimony given unto

him by God himself, we may most certainly conclude this person to have been as high a moralist as ever lived ; God himself having given so high a character of him, both for his piety and charity. And yet, it seems this man lacked one thing too. For the angel, which was sent from God on purpose to do it, bids him *send to Joppa for one Simon, whose surname was Peter, and he shall tell thee*, saith he, *what thou oughtest to do*, ver. 5, 6. What he ought to do, may some say ; what could Cornelius do more than he had done, being so devout, so pious, so charitable a man as he was, and that in the esteem of God himself ? It is true, he was so. And yet we see Peter must be sent for, to tell him what he must do farther. And what Peter was to tell him, is plain from what he did tell him when he was come to him ; even that he must believe in Jesus Christ : for *to him*, as St. Peter told him, *give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins*, Acts x. 43. From whence common reason will easily infer, that Cornelius, for all his repentance and good works, yet must believe too, or else he could not be saved. It is true, his alms and prayers were gone up for a memorial before God ; or, as it is expressed, Acts x. 31. *they were had in remembrance in the sight of God* ; that is, God was pleased to take special notice of them, so as to return him a suitable blessing for them ; which was to direct him how they might be accepted before him. For though God remembered them, it is not said that he accepted of them : no ; that could not be. For though they might be sincere, they were not perfect. Howsoever, God was pleased so far to remember them, as to send an angel to acquaint him how he might come to the knowledge and faith in Christ, in whom they might be accepted. But seeing his devotion and repentance, howsoever remarkable, yet would not serve his turn

without his believing in Jesus Christ; it is plain and manifest to the meanest capacity, that repentance of itself, although it include under it a sincere obedience to all the moral law, yet will not do our work, nor bring us to heaven, without faith in Christ.

In the last place: from this connection of these two duties together, I farther observe, that faith and repentance are equally necessary in order to salvation, though in divers respects: repentance, because without it we cannot go to Christ; and faith, because without it we can receive no benefit from him. So that these two are like twins, are always to go together: neither indeed can they ever be said properly to be asunder, or one without the other: for without repentance, faith is nothing but a groundless presumption; and without faith, repentance is nothing at all, for it will stand us in no stead. And hence it is, that repentance and faith being so equally necessary in themselves, and so inseparable in their practice; hence, I say, it is, that either of them is sometimes in Scripture put for both, or for whatsoever is required in order to our salvation. Thus, when St. Peter said to the Jews, *Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*, Acts iii. 19. it is plain, that repentance there includes faith, without which our sins will never be pardoned. But when Paul and Silas said to the keeper of the prison, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*, Acts xvi. 31. there faith doth as plainly include repentance, without which no man is or can be saved.

There being therefore such an inseparable connection betwixt these two duties; hence it follows, that as they err on the one hand, who are altogether for faith, without repentance and good works; so they err too on the other hand, who are altogether for repentance and good works, without faith. And therefore, if we desire to go to heaven, we must be sure to keep the middle betwixt these two ex-

tremes. And what Christ hath joined together in his preaching, we must not put asunder in our practice. We must not only *repent*, but *believe the Gospel*.

Having thus considered both the nature of repentance, and its necessary connection, with *believing the Gospel*; it now remains that we seriously consider what this *believing of the Gospel* is, or what it is that our Saviour would have us do when he bids us *believe the Gospel*. And for the finding out of this, there are only two things to be considered: first, what this Gospel is which we ought to believe; and then, what it is to believe this Gospel.

As for the first; the word which we translate *Gospel*, is Εὐαγγέλιον, which, according to its notation and etymology, signifies *glad tidings*, or a *joyful message*; in which sense, it is used by heathenish as well as Christian writers. And indeed our English word *Gospel* imports the same thing: for in the ancient Saxon language, from whence our English comes, as *man* signifies both man and wickedness; so *God* signifies both God and good: and *spell* signifies a word, or message; and so *godspell* signifies both God's word, and a good message, or glad tidings; or, as we say, good news. And under this notion it is, that the prophets seem to speak of Christ, as of one that should bring glad tidings: *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation!* Isa. lii. 7. And, *behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings*, Nahum i. 15. Thus when the angel was sent to acquaint the shepherds with the birth of Christ, he revealed it to them under this notion; *Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people*, Luke ii. 10. And what these good tidings were, is intimated in that celestial hymn which the choir of heaven immediately sang together, as soon as the aforesaid message was deli-

vered; *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace; good-will towards men*, ver. 14. And by whom this peace was come on earth, and good-will towards men, the angel teacheth in the foregoing verse; *For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*, ver. 11.

These things being thus premised, if we consider the Gospel simply of itself, and as it is distinct from the Law, it may briefly be thus described: the Gospel is the glad tidings of God's *good-will towards men* in their pardon, acceptance, and salvation by Jesus Christ. For the better understanding of which description, I shall lay down these following propositions.

First: all mankind, by reason of their sins, are become obnoxious to the wrath of God, and eternal death; for as the law concludes all under sin, sin concludes all under wrath: so that the whole mass of mankind, and all particular persons contained under it, are, by the law of God, condemned to die the death which was threatened to the first transgressors of it, in whom the rest were all virtually comprehended; by which means, *all the world is become guilty before God*, Rom. iii. 19. that is, all the posterity of Adam is tainted with sin, and so is obliged to undergo the penalty of it: which being nothing less than eternal death, it is that which we are all subject to, and bound to suffer.

Secondly: this death, which we were all obliged to suffer, the Son of God was pleased to suffer it in our steads, in our own nature assumed into his divine Person. This is that which the Socinian ear doth not love to hear of, and his mouth is continually exclaiming against: that Christ died, they cannot deny; but they would fain persuade the world, that he died for no other end, but only to confirm his doctrine, and for an example of humility, patience, and self-denial to us. Which certainly no truly Christian ear

can hear of without tingling: that the great God should suffer, nay, appoint his Son, his only-begotten Son, in whom himself said *he was well pleased*, to die so shameful, so painful and cursed a death as he did, and all for no other end, but to do that again which he had done sufficiently before in his life and miracles. This is such an opinion, that we may justly wonder how any one should profess the Christian religion, and yet at the same time assert this; which overthrows, or at least undermines, the very foundation of that religion which they do profess. For if this were the only reason and end of our Saviour's sufferings, then farewell all hopes of pardon and salvation. But, blessed be God for it, I think there is no one truth more clearly delivered in all the Scriptures than this is, that Christ so died for us, and in our steads, as to satisfy God's justice for our sins, and so take off our obligation to the punishments which we were obnoxious to by them. For the apostle tells us expressly, that *Christ was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*, Rom. iv. 25. That *he gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*, 1 Tim. ii. 6. That *he loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering for sin, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour*, Eph. v. 2. That *he was a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2. That *he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, as well as purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. That *it is in his blood that we have redemption, even the remission of sins*, Eph. i. 7. That *he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being himself made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. That *he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. And the prophet saith, that *he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace*

was upon him, and that by his stripes we are healed, Isa. liii. 5. and that the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all, ver. 6. Yea, and Christ himself tells us expressly, that he came to give himself a ransom for many, Matt. xx. 28. λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν, a ransom instead of many, as the words most plainly import. Now how is it possible that Christ's dying for our sins, and so to redeem us from the death we were liable to, could be expressed in more perspicuous terms than these are? and all to confirm us in this great truth, that Christ dying for us, hath thereby undergone the punishment which was due to us for our sins against God.

Hence, in the third place, in and through Christ we are made capable of pardon, acceptance, and salvation: yea, none of us can miss of it, that will but perform the easy conditions required in order to it. We may have our sins pardoned; that is, our obligations to death and punishment cancelled, and taken off; because he hath paid the debt, and undergone the punishments which were due to us. And as our sins may be pardoned, so may our persons be accepted as righteous in and through him: not for any inherent righteousness in ourselves; for, as the prophet tells us, *our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags*; but by the righteousness of Christ ascribed or imputed to us. So that although our persons be not so righteous, nor our actions so perfect, as the law of God requires; yet if we sincerely endeavour to do our duty to God and man, God will accept of our sincerity in and through Christ, instead of perfection, and so accept both of our persons and performances as righteous, although they be not so in themselves; which certainly he would never do, was it not for the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to us. And this is that which the Scriptures call our *justification before God*; even when God is pleased to accept of us, and of what we

do in and through his Son Jesus Christ. For, as when our sins were imputed to him, he was crucified for them ; so when his righteousness is imputed to us, we are justified by it. And being justified in time, we cannot but be glorified for ever : for *whom he hath justified*, saith the apostle, *them he hath also glorified*, Rom. viii. 30.

In the last place therefore : these glad tidings which our Saviour brought to the world, of our pardon, acceptance, and salvation in and through him, is that which himself here calls the Gospel, and commands us to believe. Glad tidings indeed ! that the eternal God should have that pity and compassion towards us, as to send his only Son to die for us, and so to redeem us from that death which was due unto us ! Glad tidings indeed ! that such sinful persons as we at the best are, and such imperfect actions as we at the best do, should be accepted of by the most holy God himself ! and yet there is none of us, but ours may be so, if we will but sincerely perform, unto the utmost of our power, what Christ himself requires of us in order to it ; even *repent*, and *believe this Gospel*.

Having thus examined what the Gospel is which we are to believe in ; we are now to consider, what it is to believe in this Gospel. A thing which it must needs behove you all rightly to understand, forasmuch as your eternal salvation depends upon the practice of this one duty : for *he that believeth in Christ, is not condemned ; but he that believeth not, is condemned already*, John iii. 18. *There is no name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Christ*, Acts iv. 12. Neither is there any way appointed for us to be saved by Christ, but only by believing in him. It is true our repentance doth qualify us for pardon and salvation ; but it cannot purchase or obtain it for us. There is no such virtue in the tears of repentance, as to wash away the guilt

of sin ; neither can the fig-leaves of our own righteousness hide our nakedness from the eyes of an all-seeing God. Moses may, and should, lead us through the wilderness ; but it is only Joshua, or Jesus, can carry us into Canaan. The moral law must direct our steps, but it is the Gospel only that can save our souls. So that if we ever desire to sail into the haven of eternal happiness, it must be through the blood of Christ ; by whom alone it is that our former sins can be pardoned, our present lusts subdued, our persons justified before God here, and our souls glorified with him hereafter. And as it is only by Christ that we can be saved, so we cannot be saved by him without faith : nothing that we do will please God ; and without faith, nothing that Christ hath done will profit us : his wounds will not heal us, nor his blood cleanse us ; his merit will not be imputed to us, nor his Spirit implanted in us, unless we believe in him. And therefore, if ever we desire to partake of what Christ hath done and suffered, merited and procured for mankind, we must be sure to believe in his Gospel aright. Which, notwithstanding, we can never do, until we first know what it is to do so : which I shall therefore endeavour to explain unto you at this time, with as much brevity and perspicuity as possibly I can.

Now for our right understanding our Saviour's pleasure in commanding us to believe his Gospel, we must first know the nature of faith in general ; for otherwise we can never rightly apprehend the nature of that particular faith which is here required of us. Faith therefore, or belief in general, is nothing else but the assent of the mind to what is attested by another, grounded upon the authority of him that doth attest it. Where, by the assent of the mind, I mean that act or habit of the understanding, whereby it receiveth and acknowledgeth any thing as a truth. And then I call it the assent of the mind to what is

attested by another, to distinguish it from other assents which cannot come under the notion of faith, as having different objects from it. For things that are apparent in themselves; as, that the whole is greater than any part of it; or are evident unto sense: such things, though I assent to them, yet such an assent cannot properly be called faith, or believing; because the things I assent to are not only credible, but apparent, either to my sense or understanding, without the testimony of any other. So also for truths, which though not apparent in themselves, yet appear to be so by discourse and ratiocination; although I assent to them, yet I cannot so properly be said to believe them, as to know them: and such an assent is not faith, but science. For faith hath nothing for its object but what is attested by another; and by consequence, as I added in the description of it, it is grounded upon the authority of him that attests it, without being apparent in itself, or to sense or reason. So that in faith properly so called, there is nothing that moves our assent, but only the credit or authority of him that testifieth that which we believe; and we therefore only believe it, because he attests it, and so far as he attests it. And hence it is that our assent to what is propounded to us by another, is always stronger or weaker, according as the authority of him that propounds it seems greater or less to us. And the authority of him that propounds any truth to be believed, depends upon his known ability in knowing the truth of what he propounds, and upon his honesty in propounding it according to his knowledge. And therefore, what men assert for truth only upon their own testimony, I can never give a full and perfect assent to it, because the knowledge of men is imperfect, and their hearts deceitful; they may be deceived themselves, or else may have a mind to deceive one. And by consequence, there can be

no infallible ground for an human faith ; that is, for such a faith as is built upon the testimony of men, which are in themselves fallible.

But now, in matters divine we have the testimony of one, whose authority is altogether unquestionable, even of God himself ; who being infinitely wise, it is impossible for him to be deceived himself ; and being infinitely good too, it is as impossible for him to deceive others. And therefore, whatsoever he asserts or testifies, we have an infallible ground to believe or assent unto it. And this is that which we call a divine faith ; even when we assent to any truth only upon the testimony of God himself ; which is most certainly the highest kind of faith which we can possibly exert, because it hath an infallible testimony for the ground and foundation of it.

These things being thus premised, it is easy to find out what is the first act of that faith which our blessed Saviour here enjoins us to have in the Gospel, or glad tidings, which he brought into the world. For seeing he was sent from God himself to preach the Gospel, and himself too that preached was truly God, it necessarily follows, that he here requires such a faith in the Gospel, as is grounded upon the testimony of God himself ; that is, a divine faith, assenting to what is delivered in the Gospel, in a manner suitable to the authority of him that delivered it : and by consequence, more firmly than we do to any thing that we see, or hear, or know, by arguments and discourse of reason ; because our senses are fallible, and so is our reason too : but God, we know, is perfectly infallible ; and therefore what he asserts, we are not only bound to believe it because he asserts it, but we are bound also to give the highest assent to it that is possible to be given to any assertion whatsoever ; so as to believe it impossible it should be otherwise than he asserts it. And that we are thus to believe the Gospel upon the

infallible testimony of God himself, St. John doth plainly attest, saying, *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater : for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself : he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar ; because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son,* 1 John v. 9, 10, 11. That God hath given us eternal life in his Son Christ, is the sum of all the Gospel. But for this, saith the apostle, *we have the record or testimony of God himself ; and therefore, whosoever doth not fully assent unto and believe this, he hath made God a liar.* And therefore he that would believe the Gospel aright, he must not only assent unto it as a thing probable, which may or may not be true, but he must believe it as a thing infallibly true and certain, because attested by an infallible authority.

Now, in the next place, although I call such an assent as this is but the first act of that faith which our Saviour here requires in the Gospel ; yet if it be rightly exerted, it will necessarily produce whatsoever is required to our believing in the Gospel, so as to be interested in all the benefits and privileges of it. For he that firmly and stedfastly assenteth unto this proposition, that God upon our repentance will pardon, accept, and save us, in and through Jesus Christ ; cannot but trust and confide in the same Jesus Christ for his pardon, acceptance, and salvation, because he hath the infallible word of God, that in and through Christ he will do it for us. And in this, doubtless, consisteth the very essence of saving or justifying faith ; even in trusting and relying upon Christ alone for pardon and salvation, so as to expect it from him, and from none but him. And hence it is that our Saviour himself delights to express our believing in him, by coming to him ; as,

He that cometh to me, shall never hunger ; and he that believeth in me, shall never thirst, John vi. 35. And, All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me ; and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out, verse 37. And elsewhere, Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, Matt. xi. 28. From whence we may observe, that the faith which our Saviour requires, is not such a light assent which swims only in the brain, but such a firm and solid assent as sinks into the heart, and there moves and inclines the will to Christ ; so as to put the soul upon going to Christ, and resting upon him for pardon and acceptance with the most high God. Thus we find St. Paul giving us a very remarkable instance of his faith in the Gospel, when he triumphed so much in what Christ hath done and suffered for us, that he mattered nothing that can be done against us ; saying, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, &c. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, &c. Rom. viii. 33, 34, 35, 37, 38.* Where we may observe, not only the strength, but the nature of his faith too ; even that it was such a faith as made him so confident of the pardon of his sins, and of the love of God towards him in Jesus Christ, that he defied all opposition that could be made against him ; being fully persuaded, that nothing could separate him from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

But the main stress of our salvation lying upon our right performing this duty, give me leave to explain it a little farther to you. There are but two ways, you know, whereby it ever was or will be

possible for mankind to remain or become happy ; whereof the one was, by performing universal and absolutely perfect obedience to the moral law, so as not to offend in the least circumstance or punctilio of it. And this was called *the covenant of works* : the tenor whereof ran thus, *Do this, and live*. But man having made himself incapable of ever attaining unto happiness this way, God was pleased to find out another way ; and that was, to erect, as it were, a court of chancery, to mitigate the rigour of the common law : which he did, by sending his own Son to take the nature of mankind in general upon him ; and in that, to do and suffer whatsoever mankind was obliged to : who therefore in our nature thus assumed into his divine person, having in his life performed perfect obedience to the moral law, and in his death undergone all the punishment that was due to sin, and all for us, and in our steads ; hence God is pleased not only to pardon our former sins, by reason of Christ's satisfaction for them, and so to accept of his death instead of ours ; but likewise by reason of that perfect and exact obedience, which he in our nature hath fulfilled to the moral law, God is pleased for his sake to accept of our sincere endeavours, in lieu of that perfect obedience which before was due from us, as absolutely necessary to our being justified before God. So that if we do but sincerely endeavour to do what we can, although it be not so exact as the law requires ; yet God for Christ's sake will accept of what we do, and enable us for the future to do more. And this is that which is called *the covenant of grace*, the *Gospel*, and the *New Testament* ; all which are but equivalent terms, denoting God's accepting of Christ's passion and perfection instead of ours.

Now all that God requires of us, in order to his accepting our sincerity in lieu of perfection for Christ's sake, is only to take his word for it ; to

trust and depend upon the promises which he hath made to this purpose in Jesus Christ ; and on Christ too, in whom they were made, and in whom alone they are confirmed and performed to us. And this is indeed the proper notion of *believing the Gospel*, or *believing in the Gospel*, as the words, *πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ Εὐαγγελίῳ*, import ; even so to believe the glad tidings which God hath sent to mankind, of pardon, acceptance, and salvation, in and through Jesus Christ, so as to rely and depend upon him, and him alone for it : doing what we can, and yet not trusting in what we do, but only in what Christ hath done and suffered for us : sincerely endeavouring to obey the law unto the utmost of our power, and yet not relying upon our own obedience, but only on Christ's merits for our acceptance before God. Thus St. Paul acted his faith in the Gospel, when he tells us, that *as touching the righteousness which is of the law*, he was *blameless*, that is, as to his outward conversation, Phil. iii. 6. And yet he presently adds, *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*, ver. 7, 8, 9. In which words, you have as clear an instance of believing in the Gospel, as words are able to express. For here we see, that although his obedience to the law was so exact, that as to any outward appearance he was blameless ; yet howsoever he placed no trust or confidence at all in that, but counts it as nothing without Christ. And therefore desires to be found in him, *not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ*. So that he renounced plainly

his own righteousness, and trusted only in another's, even in the righteousness of Christ; which being imputed or made over to us only by faith, he therefore calls it the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ. And it is only by this righteousness that we are justified, that is, accepted as righteous before God; and not by the righteousness which is of the law, as the same apostle expressly tells us, saying, *Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law*, Rom. iii. 28. And for any one to say, as some have done, that by the law here we are to understand not the moral, but only the ceremonial law; this is directly contrary not only to the design, but the very words of the apostle here; who having asserted our justification not by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ; he presently adds, *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law*, ver. 31. Which plainly argues, that the apostle here speaks only of that law which is established by faith, which can be no other but the moral law. And therefore, though the apostle here doth still assert our obedience to the moral law as necessary, yet he denies that we are or can be justified by it; because in the rigour of justice, God cannot accept of our persons or actions as righteous by virtue of our obedience to the moral law, by reason of our manifold imperfections and deviations from the rules of justice: upon which account, therefore, the apostle justly excludes our moral righteousness from the matter of our justification, ascribing it wholly and only to faith in Christ, whereby our sincerity is accepted of in lieu of perfection, and our persons are accepted of as righteous by virtue of Christ's righteousness imputed to us. And by consequence, our natures are made holy here, and our souls happy for ever. For this necessarily follows upon our justification before God, and reconciliation to him. And therefore,

although faith be certainly distinct from good works, yet it can never be without them, nor they without it: no works being accepted of as good, but in and through Jesus Christ. And whosoever doth not believe, and trust in Jesus Christ alone for the acceptance, both of himself, and what he doth before God, neither himself, nor his actions will be ever accepted of as righteous by him; this being the only way whereby we can partake of the merits of Christ's death and passion, even by believing and confiding in the promises of the Gospel, that our former sins upon our repentance shall be pardoned, our future obedience accepted, and so our souls eternally saved, upon the account of what Jesus Christ hath done and suffered for us; which we have certainly all the reason in the world to believe and confide in, having the infallible word and promise of God himself for it.

Having thus explained the text which our Saviour first preached upon, and that which was the sum and substance of that religion which he hath established in the world, even *repent, and believe the Gospel*: from what you have heard upon this subject, it is easy to gather what is necessary to be done, in order to your salvation; which, that you may the better understand, I shall present you with it in few terms.

Such therefore amongst you as sincerely desire to go to heaven, take but this course, and you cannot miss of it.

First, whatsoever sins you know yourselves to have been guilty of, and lived in, you must be sure so to repent of them, as to be humbled for them, and forsake them. And do not say that you know nothing by yourselves which you need be troubled for, or turn from: for I dare say there are none of you but are conscious to yourselves that you have either lived in the neglect of some known duty, or

else in the frequent commission of some known sin, which you must either leave, or else you are never likely to come to heaven.

Secondly, having gone so far, as truly to repent of, and leave your former sins, the next thing is to resolve and purpose with yourselves, by the assistance of God's grace and Spirit, to perform sincere and universal obedience to all the moral law. For God himself hath told you, that *without holiness no man shall see his face*, Heb. xii. 14. And therefore, as ever you desire to be happy hereafter, you must sincerely endeavour, unto the utmost of your power, to be holy in all manner of conversation here. There is no help for it; you must either devote yourselves wholly to God's service, or you will never enjoy his presence and favour.

Lastly, having thus sincerely forsaken your former sins, and stedfastly resolved upon future obedience, you must be sure, moreover, to *believe the Gospel*; that is, humbly to confide and trust, that in and through Jesus Christ those sins you have now repented of shall all be pardoned, and that the sincere obedience which for the future you shall perform, will be accepted before God; and by consequence, that your persons shall be justified, or accounted righteous by him, not for your own, but for Christ Jesus' sake, whom also you must depend upon for such influences of his grace, as may enable you both to obey the Law, and believe his Gospel. And that you may the better inure yourselves to believe in the Gospel, always follow the apostle's rule: *and whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, Col. iii. 17. Whatsoever acts you perform, either of piety towards God, or of justice and charity to your neighbour, conform them all as near as possibly you can unto the laws and commands of God: and yet perform them too in the name of Christ, so as to believe them to be ac-

cepted only upon his account. Thus our Saviour assures you, *That whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in his name, he will give it you*, John xvi. 23. And elsewhere, *What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*, Mark xi. 24. From whence it is plain, that we are to pray only in the name of Christ, believing that in and through him our prayers shall be accepted, otherwise they will not. The same may be said of all other duties, so as to do whatsoever is commanded us as exactly as we can; and when all is done, depend upon Christ, and him alone, for the pardon of our sins, acceptance of our persons and performances, and so for the salvation of our immortal souls. By this means you will both *repent, and believe the Gospel*, and so walk in the ready road to heaven.

Thus I have endeavoured, in as few terms and as much clearness as the nature of the thing was capable of, to unfold unto you the great mystery of man's salvation by Jesus Christ, upon these easy terms of *repenting, and believing the Gospel*. What now remains, but that knowing the way how to get to heaven, you should resolve upon the practice of it, without which, your knowing of it will avail you nothing. And let me tell you, the way which I now described, even by repentance, and faith in Christ, many thousands are now become so many glorified saints in heaven, which once were sinful creatures upon earth, as we now are. And if you will but do as they did, you may be ere long where they are. And therefore, let me beseech you not to think it enough that you have heard how to get to heaven, but from this day forward set yourselves seriously upon the practice of it. Repent, repent of all your sins, and turn again unto the Lord your God, and serve him for the future with a perfect heart, and a willing mind, and then believe in Christ for your pardon and acceptance; and you have the word of God for it, that *you shall be saved*.

SERMON XC.

HOLINESS THE GREAT DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION.

TITUS ii. 11, 12.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

AMONGST the many excellent and divine sayings which proceeded from our Saviour's mouth when he was here upon earth, and are still left upon record for us to know and consider, I know nothing more sharp and severe than that short sentence of his, that *many are called, but few chosen*, Matt xxii. 14. The consideration whereof cannot surely but cut us to the heart, especially if we remember likewise who it was that said it, even that very person which came into the world on purpose to lay down his own life to ransom and save ours. And that he should say, that for all those horrid blasphemies, those bitter agonies, that cruel death which he hath undergone for mankind, yet but few of them should be chosen to salvation; yea, that of those very persons who are called to partake of it, but few are chosen to it; this is such a thing that no man can seriously consider it, but it must needs startle and awake him from his security, and make him look about him, and bethink himself how he may be in the number of these few

which are chosen and saved by Christ. And verily it is a great comfort to us, that though there be but few, there are some chosen; especially considering that you and I also are as capable of being in the number of those few, as any other whatsoever, and it is our own faults if we be not; for we are all be sure in the number of the many which are called, we are all invited to accept of the grace and pardon which is offered us in the Gospel. But if we refuse to answer when we are called, and will not come up to these easy terms which are proposed to us in the Gospel, and so exclude ourselves from being chosen, whom can we blame but ourselves for it? As, suppose an earthly prince having a company of stubborn and refractory subjects under him, they with one consent rise up and rebel against him; but his only son having appeased his wrath, and interceding for them, he is pleased to send his heralds to proclaim peace and pardon to all that will lay down their arms, and return to their obedience again, otherwise he will use the rigour of his laws against them, and inflict the severest punishments that he can upon them: and if they remain so obstinate as not to accept of their prince's favour, you will all acknowledge that they deserve the height of his fury and displeasure.

The case is clearly our own. We and all mankind have rebelled against the universal Monarch of the world; we have broken his laws, and refused to submit to his government and authority over us, by which means we have incurred the severest of his displeasure against us. But his only-begotten Son having made atonement, and still interceding for us, he is pleased to send his servants and ministers to proclaim pardon to all that will cease from their rebellious and treasonable practices against him, and for the future pay their just homage and obedience unto him; and to assure us withal, that all such per-

sons as will not come in and lay hold upon that mercy and favour which is offered them, shall be proceeded against with all the severity imaginable, as traitors and rebels to the King of heaven. And, therefore, if we still stand out, and will not accept of the gracious offers which are made unto us, whatsoever punishment should be inflicted upon us, we must even thank ourselves for it. For if we be not in the number of the chosen as well as of the called, it is only because we will not perform those things which we are called to; for this^d is most certain, that he who doth what the Gospel requires, cannot but attain whatsoever is promised in it, the promises being altogether as faithful as the commands are just. So that if we do but observe those rules which the Gospel lays down before us, all the good things which are promised in it shall most faithfully be conferred upon us. What those good things are which are promised in the Gospel, I need not tell you; for you cannot but know yourselves that there is nothing desirable or needful to make men happy, but what Christ in his Gospel offers to all such as believe and obey him, by whom we may have our sins all pardoned, our persons justified, our duties accepted, our God reconciled, our lusts subdued, our hearts adorned with grace in time, and our heads crowned with glory to eternity. So that in and through Christ, there is never a soul here present, but may hereafter sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, and be made *ισάγγελος*, like or equal to the angels themselves in glory, happiness, purity, and perfection.

But the great question is, what it is which the Gospel requires of us in order to our partaking of such glorious and transcendent privileges as these are. For nothing can be more certain than that all those who hear and profess the Gospel shall not receive any real benefit or advantage by it, no more

than as if Christ had never died, or his Gospel had never been preached amongst them. But this cannot be imputed to the Gospel itself, but only to some defect in them that hear it, because they come not up to the terms which are proposed, nor perform such duties as are commanded in it, without which no man can have any interest at all in any one promise made therein to mankind. And therefore, as ever we desire to partake of those glorious things which are propounded and offered to us in the Gospel, we must be sure to observe such rules as the Gospel hath prescribed in order thereunto. And that you may clearly understand what these are, I have chosen these words to explain unto you, wherein they are as fully and plainly discovered to us as words could do it. *For the grace of God which bringeth salvation, &c.*

Which words therefore containing matter of so great and necessary importance to us all, in speaking to them I shall not discourage your attention with raising any intricate or impertinent observations from them, but shall endeavour to explain them as briefly and clearly as possibly I can unto you, and that too in the same order wherein they lie, that so the meanest capacity in the congregation may apprehend the true meaning and purport of them.

First, therefore, by the *grace of God*, we are here to understand God's infinite love and mercy to mankind, in sending his Son into the world to die for us, as it is revealed to us in his Gospel, which is therefore called *εὐαγγέλιον τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ*, *the Gospel of the grace of God*, Acts xx. 24. and *λόγος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ*, *the word of his grace*, ver. 32. And for this reason it is that it is called *εὐαγγέλιον*, *glad tidings*, because it is in the Gospel that God hath revealed or made known to mankind his undeserved grace and favour, in the pardon, acceptance, and assistance of all such persons as sincerely repent of their sins, and believe

in Jesus Christ. And by this it is that the Gospel is distinguished from the Law. The Law requires exact and perfect obedience from us, unto every punctilio and circumstance of it, and threatens death and destruction to every one that doth not punctually observe every thing prescribed in it. But the Gospel is as it were a court of Chancery, that mitigates the rigour of the common law, accepting of our sincerity instead of perfection, and promising pardon and forgiveness to all such as sincerely endeavour to do what they can, and trust in the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, for the acceptance of what they do. By which means we are all now in a capacity, though not of performing perfect obedience, yet of performing such an obedience as for Christ's sake may be accepted of in lieu of perfect; which is certainly the highest act of grace and favour that could possibly be shewn to mankind, we being now put into a way of being restored to that happiness which by our sins we are fallen from; so that our sins may be all pardoned, our persons justified, our duties accepted, and so our souls eternally saved. And hence it is that this grace of God to mankind, thus clearly revealed to us in the Gospel of Christ, is here called, *The grace of God, which bringeth salvation*; which is the second expression to be considered.

The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, the χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ, the σωτηρία, *the saving grace of God*, as the words may be expounded; that is, that grace of God whereby alone it is possible for mankind to be saved: so that our salvation here is wholly attributed to the grace of God, yet so as not to exclude either Christ's satisfaction for us, or our duty and obedience to God.

1. I say the grace of God doth not so bring salvation as to exclude the satisfaction of Christ for our sins, and not so as if our salvation was to be ascribed

wholly and solely to the free grace and mercy of God, without any respect at all to the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ. For if so, to what purpose did Christ die at all? what need he have assumed our human nature, and suffered so much as he hath done in it, if our sins might be pardoned, and our souls saved without it? Certainly he that seriously considers who Christ was, what he did, and how much he underwent for mankind, cannot but acknowledge that his death was of indispensable necessity in order to our life and happiness, or otherwise he would not have undergone it; insomuch that though we are not to dispute the infiniteness of God's grace and power, yet all things being duly considered, I do not see how it was possible for fallen man to be restored to happiness without the death and sufferings of Christ for him. For God having expressly said to Adam, and in him to all mankind, *Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, Gen. ii. 17 and it being impossible for God to lie, or not to do according as he hath said; hence it necessarily follows that death must be inflicted upon mankind, at least upon the general nature of man, as it was then contained wholly in the first Adam; and by consequence, that unless Christ had suffered that death in the nature of man, which was then threatened to it, all mankind partaking of that nature, must of necessity have undergone it in their own persons, or else the word that proceeded out of God's mouth would not have been fulfilled. And upon this account it is that Christ is called our Saviour, and asserted to have saved us from death, to have redeemed us from our sins, and to be the *propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2. Yea, Christ himself saith, that he came *to give his life a ransom for many*, *λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν*; a ransom instead

of many, Matt. xx. 28. where the word λύτρον, or *ransom*, properly signifies *redemptionis pretium*, the price which is given for the redemption of captives. And therefore our Saviour saying, that he came to give his life, λύτρον, or a ransom, or price of redemption, for many; it plainly argues that he paid, as it were, something for us, whereby to redeem us from the slavery of sin and Satan, by undergoing the death which we were obnoxious to, and so making full and complete satisfaction to the justice of God for us; he having suffered infinitely more for us than it was possible for ourselves ever to have done in our own persons. From whence it necessarily follows, that when it is here said that the grace of God bringeth salvation, our salvation is not so attributed to the grace of God, as to exclude the merits and satisfaction of Christ.

And then, secondly, as the grace of God that bringeth salvation doth not exclude the satisfaction that Christ hath made for us, so neither doth it exclude the duties and obedience which we owe to God. But although we must acknowledge that our salvation is to be ascribed to the free grace and infinite goodness and mercy of God to mankind; yet we are as much obliged or bound to obey the moral law, and to perform whatsoever is required in it, either to God or man, as if we were to be saved by our obedience, without respect either to God's grace or Christ's merits; because it is by this that we are qualified for that salvation which the grace of God in Christ hath brought to us, insomuch that our salvation depends upon that too as *causa sine qua non*, as without which we shall never be saved. And therefore as it is a dangerous and mischievous doctrine to assert, that our obedience or good works can merit any thing at the hand of God, or bring us to heaven without faith in Christ; so on the other side, it is a fond and ridiculous opinion to fancy that either

God's love, or Christ's death for mankind, hath taken off any of our obligations to obedience, as if we were not as much or more obliged to obey God now we are in a capacity of salvation, than we were when our obedience would stand us in no stead at all, as without the grace of God in Jesus Christ, it would not. Be sure the apostle here was quite of another mind; even that the grace of God bringing salvation to mankind, is so far from encouraging us in vice and wickedness, that it teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, &c. as I shall endeavour to shew more fully when I come to those words.

In the mean time having seen how these words, *the grace of God which bringeth salvation*, are not to be understood, even not so as to exclude either Christ's merits, or man's duty; we are now to consider positively, in what sense the grace of God is here said to bring salvation. Why, in few terms, our salvation is here attributed to the grace of God as the first moving cause of it: whatsoever hath or can be done in order to our salvation being still from the infinite grace and love of God. For when all mankind were become guilty before him, he might justly have left them in the same condition with the fallen or apostatized angels, without any hopes of pardon or mercy from him, or without ever putting them into a way of recovery from sin and misery. But he was pleased of his infinite and essential goodness to have so much pity and compassion on fallen man, as to find out a way how to raise him up again; which can be ascribed to nothing else but to his own free grace, and altogether undeserved mercy to us. And hence it is that whatsoever hath been done in order to man's salvation, is all along in Scripture resolved into the grace and love of God towards us. As for example; did God send his Son into the world to die for us? He did so. But wherefore did he do it? Was it because

mankind had deserved so great a favour at his hands? No: it was only of his infinite love and mercy towards us. *Herein is love*, saith the apostle, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*, 1 John iv. 10. And Christ himself assures us of the same, John iii. 16. Did Christ the Son of God come down to lay down his own life to redeem ours? What should move him to so strange and astonishing a condescension as that was? Nothing certainly could do it but his own intrinsic love and compassion towards us. *I live*, saith the apostle, *by the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*, Gal. ii. 20. Because he loved us, he was therefore pleased to give himself for us. Doth God choose and elect any of us to serve him here, and to enjoy him hereafter? How well may this be termed the election of grace, as it is Rom. xi. 5. and ascribed wholly to his good-will and pleasure, Eph. i. 5. Doth God call us by the ministers of his word from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God? Doth he invite us to partake of all the merits of Christ's death and passion? Doth he reveal his Gospel to us, and call upon us to receive and embrace it? Blessed be his great name for it! he doth so. But wherefore doth he do it? because we are better or more obedient than others unto him? No: but because he is more gracious and merciful to us than to others, 2 Tim. i. 9. Doth he wash us from our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness? Doth he sanctify us throughout by his grace and Spirit, and make us holy as he is holy? Oh! wherefore should the eternal God be thus favourable to such silly worms as we are, but merely for his free grace and mercy towards us? Tit. iii. 5. 1 Pet. i. 3. Doth God also, upon our sincere repentance and faith in Christ, pardon our manifold and great transgressions? Doth he accept of our persons and performances, so that we are justified

before him? How comes this about? Have we any thing in us that can recommend us to so holy a God as he is? or can we be acquitted from our sins, or justified before him, by virtue of any thing that ourselves can do? No, alas! we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God; we have all broken his laws, incurred his displeasure, and so stand but as so many guilty, yea condemned malefactors before him. But how then is it possible for any of us to be justified or accepted of as righteous before him? The apostle resolves the question in few terms; *We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*, Rom. iii. 24. It is by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; and yet it is freely too by the grace of God that any of us are justified. What shall I say more? Do we expect after all this to come to heaven? Shall any of us be ever so happy as to be admitted into God's presence, to behold his glory, and enjoy his divine perfections for evermore? Who are we poor sinful mortals, that we should ever expect such happiness as this is? or what grounds can we have to hope for it? None surely, but the infinite grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord: as the apostle teacheth, saying, *The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 23. If we speak of our desert, that is death; death is the only wages we have all deserved. And if we speak of eternal life, that we must acknowledge to be the free gift of God in Jesus Christ.

Thus we see how it is the grace of God alone that bringeth salvation to mankind. It was of his infinite grace that he was pleased to send his Son to die for us, it is by this that Christ gave his life a ransom for many, it is by this that we are both called and chosen, it is by this that our persons are justified, it is by this that our natures are sanctified, and it is by this that our souls are saved; so that the whole

matter of man's salvation, from the beginning to the end, must be ultimately resolved into God's infinite grace to mankind, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Which grace of his is here asserted to have appeared to all men, ἐπεφάνη πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις, it hath shined forth to all men; implying, that before men sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, looking for no such thing as salvation, but rather despairing of it; when upon a sudden, as the word properly signifies, there sprang forth an unexpected light into the world, God's infinite love to mankind being made clear and manifest to all men. Before this time, God made known his grace and favour only to his peculiar people, the Jews, suffering all other nations to walk in their own ways, Acts xiv 16. But now the former shades of darkness and error being dispersed, the Son of righteousness arose with healing in his wings upon all the corners of the world, darting forth his beams of light and grace to all men, that is, to men of all nations, ages, tongues, estates, and conditions in the world: so that now there is no difference betwixt Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, bond or free, all have the grace of God equally dispensed unto them; they are all one in Jesus Christ, Gal. iii. 28. Col. iii. 11. So that now the meanest as well as the highest persons in the world may have their share in the grace of God, servants as well as masters; which is principally intended here, as Theophylact observes, from the connection of these words with the foregoing verses concerning servants, ver. 9, 10. which must needs be an extraordinary both excitement and encouragement to our laying hold upon the grace of God, considering that it is so large and boundless, that the poorest as well as the richest person amongst us may be partaker of it; for it hath appeared to all men, and particularly to you and me who are here assembled. From whence we may infer two things which highly concern us all.

1. That we ought to be truly thankful for this extraordinary expression of God's love to mankind, as also for the revelation of it unto us, that we the most unworthy of all his creatures should be so fully acquainted with it as we either are or may be, Matt. xi. 25.

2. Hence we may infer likewise what a necessity lies upon us to be serious and constant in our prosecution of eternal happiness, seeing the way to it is made so plain before us. If we had never heard of God's grace and readiness to accept us in Jesus Christ, our sin and folly would not have been so great, Matt. xi. 21, 23. But now that *the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men*, and to us in an especial manner, as clearly as to any in the whole world, *how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?*

Thus we have seen now what we are here to understand by *the grace of God*; in what sense this *grace* is said to *bring salvation*, and how it *hath appeared to all men*. But as there were some in the apostle's time, which turned *the grace of God into lasciviousness*, Jude 4. so I fear there may be too many amongst ourselves, who hearing of *the grace of God bringing salvation to mankind*, think themselves secure and safe, so that they need not trouble themselves about their eternal happiness; for *the grace of God*, they fancy, will do all things for them, and leave nothing for themselves to do. They cannot but confess that they have sinned, and still continue in sin too; but seeing it is not themselves, but God's *grace that bringeth salvation to them*, they hope that by that their sins will be all pardoned, whether they repent seriously of them or no. But this is a dangerous mistake; a mere trap or engine of the devil to catch and destroy souls. It is true it is only by *the grace of God* that our sins are pardoned, our persons justified, or our souls saved: but we must not think that our sins are pardoned, unless our lusts

be also subdued; nor our persons justified, unless our natures be also sanctified; nor our souls saved, unless they be also cleansed by *the grace of God*; which so remits our former sins, that it turns us also for the future from them. This is the great doctrine which the apostle preacheth in these words; assuring us, that *the same grace of God which bringeth salvation to us*, teacheth us likewise to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*; or rather, *it bringeth salvation*, by teaching of us to do so.

But this being the great lesson which we must all learn if we desire to partake of the privileges of the Gospel, and without which we shall have no part or portion in what Christ hath done and suffered for mankind; that you may not be deceived in your hopes of eternal salvation, I shall endeavour to explain it more particularly unto you. And for that end shall first shew, that *the grace of God* manifested to mankind in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, doth indeed teach us all to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*, even all manner of sin and corruption whatsoever; which is so clearly asserted in the word of God, that I should think it superfluous to prove it, but that the lives and actions of those who are called Christians, and pretend to believe in Jesus Christ, so palpably contradict it. For I verily think that there is no one thing in all the Scriptures wherein the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to express himself more fully and clearly to our weak apprehensions than this; telling us, in plain terms, that the highest expression of God's love to mankind, even the sending of his Son into the world, was to bless us, *by turning every one of us from his iniquities*, Acts iii. 26. Yea, that he was therefore called Jesus, that is, a Saviour, because he was to *save his people from their sins*, Matt. i. 28. And Christ himself, so soon as he had taken upon him the office of Mediatorship for us, the first thing that he preached and taught man-

kind was, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, Matt. iv. 17 or, as St. Mark words it, *Repent, and believe the Gospel*, Mark i. 15. And elsewhere he tells us with his own mouth, that *he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*, Matt. ix. 13. Hence the apostle gathers, that when Christ came into the world, *God commanded all men every where to repent*, Acts xvii. 30. And that he was exalted *to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins*, Acts v. 31. First repentance, and then remission of sins. In all which places, by repentance we are to understand not only contrition for, but conversion from our sins; and by consequence, obedience to all the precepts of the moral law. For that this is required of all such who expect salvation by Jesus Christ, is expressly asserted by the Holy Ghost, saying, that *Christ being made perfect, became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him*, Heb. v. 9. that is, unto all, and to them only which obey whatsoever he hath commanded: all which may be reduced to the two heads before spoken of; *Repent, and believe the Gospel*. These are the two great things which we are all obliged to perform, in order to our being saved by Jesus Christ; even sincerely to repent of our sins, turn to God, or perform whatsoever he in his law hath been pleased to enjoin us; and then to believe or trust in him, both for the pardon of our defects, and for the acceptance of our sincere though weak performances.

But I needed not to have gone so far to have proved this; for it is not only expressly asserted in my text, but likewise in the words immediately following: *looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, ver. 13, 14.

Where we have the two great ends of Christ's death both described together : *for he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity ; that is, from the guilt and deserved punishment of our sins ; and then that he might purify to himself a peculiar people ; that is, that he might cleanse us from our sins, and make us an holy and peculiar people to himself, and zealous for, and wholly devoted to, the doing of good works, both of piety towards God, and likewise of justice and charity to our neighbour.*

I should not have insisted so long upon a plain truth as this is, but only for two sorts of persons amongst us of quite different opinions : the first are such as are altogether for such a notional and speculative faith in Christ, which relies upon his merits without observing his commands ; of which I fear there are too many amongst us. The other are such as oppose, or at least neglect, the preaching up the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ, or the grace and love of God to mankind in him, as if it opened a gap to all manner of licentiousness and debauchery ; which is the greatest mistake imaginable ; for nothing in the world can more excite and encourage us to forsake our sins, and obey the commands of God, than to consider that if we do so, our sins shall be all pardoned, and the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, so that we shall be sure to be happy. Whereas to speak of our obedience to the moral law, without any respect to the merits of Jesus Christ, as the way to happiness, is the greatest disheartening and discouragement in the world to any man, so much as to endeavour to obey. For no man that seriously weighs and considers things as he ought, can be so ignorant or insensible of his own infirmities as not to know, and be conscious to himself, that he comes infinitely short of every thing which God commands ; so that should he have nothing else but his own obedience to trust to, what a sad and dismal condition

would such a man be in? how careless would he soon grow of himself? how negligent of his own actions, when he is once persuaded that he can never be saved but by his own obedience to the moral law, and yet is conscious to himself that he can never perform such obedience as the moral law requires? For why should such a man concern himself about obedience, when he knows that no obedience that he can attain to will ever stand him in any stead, because he cannot but find it to be imperfect, and to come short of what the law requires? What others think, I know not; but for my own part, should I think that I could never be saved but by my obedience to the moral law, I should never much matter whether I obeyed it or no, because I am conscious to myself that I can never obey it as I ought to do. But when I consider that if I obey it as well as I can, and trust to the merits of Jesus Christ for the pardoning of my infirmity, and supplying the many defects of my own obedience, that then my sins shall indeed be pardoned, and myself and actions accepted in and through him; this puts me upon the highest endeavours to do all I can to walk in all the commandments of God blameless, because I believe that my sincere endeavours for Christ Jesus's sake, shall be accepted of instead of absolute and legal perfection. And therefore it is a fond and ridiculous thing to say, that the preaching up the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ encourageth wickedness and vice; for it is certainly the greatest encouragement to grace and virtue that can possibly be set before us: for, as the apostle saith, *shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid*, Rom. vi. 1, 2. So say I, shall we so believe in Jesus Christ, and God's grace in him, as to continue in sin? God forbid. No, we are so far from that, that the more God's grace in Jesus Christ is manifested unto us, the more we are both obliged and encouraged to honour and

obey him, still remembering the apostle's rule here, that *the same grace which bringeth salvation, teacheth us likewise to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, &c.* Nothing therefore being more sure and certain from the whole tenour of the Gospel, than that the grace of God offered and revealed in it, doth teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; we are now to consider more particularly what it is properly to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and then what is that ungodliness and those worldly lusts which it teacheth us to deny.

As for the first, what it is properly to deny ungodliness. It is much the same with that expression in the sacrament of baptism, where the party baptized promiseth *to renounce the devil and all his works*; for this is that which the grace of God teacheth us all to do, even to renounce our former sinful ways and practices, and to deny ourselves for the future the pleasure we used to take in them. So that this denying ungodliness, as St. Chrysostom observes, denotes πολλήν τὴν διάσασιν, πολὺ τὸ μῖσος, πολλήν τὴν ἀναστροφὴν, a great distance off of it, a great hatred against it, and a great aversion from it. And so it doth not consist only in mourning for, but in turning from all manner of sin, and that too not only in our lives, but our hearts and affections also; so as to dry up the fountain as well as disperse the streams, and kill the root as well as lop off the branches of sin within us: that is, in plain terms, the grace of God teacheth you not only to forsake the outward acts, but likewise all love to, desire of, and delight in all ungodliness and worldly lusts whatsoever. Which is the next thing to be considered, even what we are here to understand by ungodliness and worldly lusts, which the grace of God teacheth us to deny.

First, by ungodliness we are here to understand whatsoever is contrary to God's word or worship;

against his word, as all manner of heresies and damnable errors, as the apostle calls them, 2 Pet. ii. 1. So St. Chrysostom expounds the words ἀσέβειαν τὰ δόγματα φησὶ, he calls erroneous opinions ungodliness, as being contrary to God's revealed will and word. But by ungodliness here we are principally to understand what is against or contrary to the worship of God, which indeed is the proper notion of the word ἀσέβεια, which, according to its notation and etymology, signifies the non-performance of divine worship, or at least some defect in it; and, by consequence, whatsoever sin is committed immediately against God himself, which we therefore call ungodliness, because it maketh a man ungodly, that is, unlike to God, of a different nature and disposition from him.

But would you have me come more home and close unto you? would you know more particularly what acts of ungodliness the Gospel teacheth you to deny? Take it in few terms: *the grace of God which bringeth salvation*, being made manifest unto you in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; it teacheth, admonisheth, adviseth, obliges, and enjoins you all, as you tender your eternal salvation, to renounce, deny, and forsake whatsoever you know to be offensive to God's person, contrary to his nature, injurious to his name, or unbecoming his honour and majesty in the world. As for example; it teacheth you to renounce and strive against your former ignorance and senselessness of God; and that you labour to get your hearts possessed with a due sense, with clear and awful apprehensions of him. It teacheth you to deny all hardness of heart, and impenitence for sins past, and to dread the thoughts of ever displeasing God any more, as heretofore you have done. It teacheth you to deny all atheistical and unbelieving thoughts of God, and to banish them out of your

minds, so as never to doubt of the certainty of his existence, the truth of his word, the equity of his precepts, nor of the faithfulness of his promises, which he hath made and confirmed to mankind in the blood of his only Son. It teacheth you to deny divine worship and honour to all persons and things in the whole world, except to the true and living God; that you do not pray to any creature, nor fall down before or worship any image or idol whatsoever in a religious manner, but to follow the apostle's direction, even to *flee from idolatry*, 1 Cor. x. 14. It teacheth you to deny not only perjury and forswearing yourselves, but likewise the taking of God's name in vain, or to no purpose, so as to fear an oath, and dread the profaning so sacred and glorious a name with your polluted lips. It teacheth you to lay aside all secular and worldly business upon the Lord's day, not to profane the sabbath, but to devote it wholly to the service and worship of Almighty God. It teacheth you to avoid all irreverence and unseemly deportment of yourselves in the presence of God: that all the while you are before him, praying unto him, singing forth his praises, or hearing his holy word, you carry yourselves so as becometh those who believe themselves to be in the presence of the supreme Being and Governor of the world, performing their homage and devotions to him. It teacheth you not to condemn, slight, or profane the ordinances and word of God; not to absent yourselves from his public worship, nor neglect his holy sacrament; not to despise his ministers, nor abuse or arrest his Scriptures to your own destruction. It teacheth you to deny hypocrisy and dissembling with God, the searcher of your hearts; not to think to cheat God, and put him off with a specious shew and plausible pretence of piety, without the power and substance of it. It teacheth you not to presume upon his mercy, nor yet to mistrust his promises;

not to neglect your duty unto him, nor to despair of his goodness and mercy unto you. In a word, *the grace of God made known unto you*, teacheth you to abstain from whatsoever is offensive or dishonourable unto God, and to perform whatsoever you think to be pleasing and acceptable unto him, and all because it *teacheth you to deny ungodliness*.

And *worldly lusts*; that is the next thing which the grace of God teacheth you to deny: where, by *worldly lusts*, we are to understand all inordinate desires of the things of this world, which the apostle reduces to those three heads. *the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life*, 1 John ii. 16. under which all the κοσμικαὶ ἐπιθυμίαι, the *worldly lusts* here spoken of, are comprehended; which being premised in general, it is easy to determine what kind of worldly lusts the grace of God teacheth you to deny. It teacheth you to deny yourselves all sensual and carnal pleasures arising from lust or luxury, from drunkenness, uncleanness, and the like; and still to keep yourselves within the bounds of modesty, temperance, and sobriety, *abstaining from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*, 1 Pet. ii. 11. *Walking honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying*, Rom. xiii. 13. It teacheth you to deny and condemn the profits and advantages of this life, as things not worthy to be compared with the glory you expect hereafter. It teacheth you to use no unlawful means to get, to keep, or to increase your estates; not to go *beyond, overreach, or defraud one another in any matter*, 1 Thess. iv. 6. It teacheth you to abstain from oppression, extortion, rapine, cozenage, and from the very appearance of evil. It teacheth you to suppress all inordinate desire of riches, which the Scriptures call covetousness, and not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world, but always to have your conversation

in heaven. It teacheth you *not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God; to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate*, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. It teacheth you not to have high thoughts or proud conceits of yourselves, but to be still humble and lowly in your own eyes, *esteeming others better than yourselves*, Phil. ii. 3. It teacheth you to be loyal to your sovereign, obedient to your magistrates, faithful to your trust, constant to your friends, loving to your enemies, diligent in your calling, content with your condition, helpful to your neighbours, charitable to the poor, just and righteous, kind and civil unto all. In a word, *the grace of God that bringeth salvation to you* teacheth you to be eminent in grace and virtue, and in all manner of good works whatsoever, *that your light may so shine, that others may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*, Matt. v. 16. and that you be *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 53.

Thus you see in part what that lesson is which the *grace of God* teacheth all such as are called to it, even to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*. And now I have done my duty in expounding this Gospel lecture to you, it is both your duty and interest to learn and practise it; but that is a thing, I fear, there are but few that ever mind or think of: you can make a shift to come and hear a sermon, but it ordinarily proves but as the *seed which was sown among the thorns; for the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, soon choke the word, so that it becomes unfruitful*, Matt. xiii. 22. I have now shewn you what the Gospel, which you all profess, requires from you; but what will it avail you to hear these things, without the doing of them? Alas, it will be so far from furthering your eternal happiness, that it

will but sink you lower into sin and misery: for *he that knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes*; they are your Lord and Saviour's own words, Luke xii. 47. the consideration whereof makes me sometimes tremble at the thoughts of the approaching day, when my preaching the Gospel to you will be found, I fear, to be the occasion of greater damnation to many of you: but we must do our duty, and leave the issue unto God; in whose name, therefore, I advise and beseech you all to consider seriously with yourselves, what you have heard at this time, even what that is which the *grace of God*, upon which your salvation depends, teaches and commands from you nothing less than *to deny all manner of ungodliness and worldly lusts*. And do not content yourselves with the bare hearing of these things, but set yourselves immediately, and in good earnest, upon the practice of them. You know every one the plague of his own heart, and the sins which do so easily beset you; have a care for the future of them, and make it your business to mortify and suppress them: study and practise this heavenly and divine art of *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*; that art which the *grace of God* teacheth all those who would be partakers of it, whereby they may *work out their salvation with fear and trembling*;

Which God of his infinite mercy grant we may all do, &c.

SERMON XCI.

HOLINESS THE GREAT DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION.

TITUS ii. 11, 12.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

THUS we have seen what it is which the grace of God teacheth us to deny; we are now to consider what it would have us do: for we must not think that the Gospel teacheth only a negative religion, consisting only in denying or abstaining from ungodliness and worldly lusts; but it requires likewise positive obedience to all the moral law. As we desire and expect not only to escape hell, but to get to heaven; not only to be freed from misery, but to be made happy; so the grace of God in order thereunto teacheth us not only to depart from evil, but to do good; not only to forsake our sins, but to turn to God; not only to cease from doing what God hath forbidden, but to do likewise what he hath commanded; or, as is here expressed, not only *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*, but *to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*. Under which three heads, *the whole duty of man* is briefly, but fully comprehended: for sobriety contains under it all such duties as respect ourselves;

righteousness those which we owe our neighbour; and godliness such as are due to God: and so amongst them they make up the whole chain of universal and evangelical obedience. Neither can they ever go alone, or be separated from one another: for sobriety without righteousness is but self-seeking; righteousness without godliness is but men-pleasing; and godliness without either of them is downright hypocrisy and deceit. So that he that is not godly, cannot be properly said to be either sober, or righteous; and he that is not both sober and righteous, cannot be said to be godly. And therefore he that would attain to any of these virtues, must labour after all. He must first begin with sobriety in himself, to keep his mind in an even frame and temper; then he must proceed to righteousness to his neighbour, to render unto all men their just due and rights; and then he must advance so far as to piety towards God, to obey, worship, and honour him. This is the method which the grace of God itself directs us to walk by: first, to live soberly, and then righteously, and then godly, in this present world: not as if, in order of nature, godliness was not before both sobriety and righteousness, but because, in order of time, a man must first begin with himself, and then go on to perform such plain and easy offices as are due unto his neighbour; and then at last come up to the highest duties of all, even such as he oweth immediately unto God himself: which no man can rationally expect ever to arrive at, that doth not observe this method. For how can that man be righteous to his neighbour, who is not so just to himself as to keep himself sober? and how can he love God whom he hath not seen, who doth not love his brother whom he hath seen? No; there neither is nor can be any true religion or piety towards God, where there is not likewise sobriety and justice towards men. Neither can that man be

just to another, that is not sober in himself. Hence it is that the grace of God, which brings salvation, prescribes this method in order to our attaining of it; even that we live first soberly, then righteously, and then godly, in this present world. And that you may all understand the full and true meaning of every duty here expressed, I shall endeavour to explain them in order as they lie. Only give me leave to premise beforehand one general observation concerning all of them, which is this, that the grace of God doth not here teach us to be sober, righteous, and godly, only now and then; but that we live soberly, righteously, and godly, all the while that we are in this present world; so that our whole lives must be adorned with these resplendent graces and Gospel virtues. There is not the most debauched person in the world but may be sometimes sober; not the most unrighteous man upon earth but he may perform some acts of justice; neither is there any man so wicked but he may sometimes seem to be godly. But this will not do our work: we must exercise ourselves continually in these things, so as always, unto the utmost of our power, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Which being premised in general, we must now come to the particular explication of each duty.

First therefore, the *grace of God* teacheth us to live soberly. The word here used is σωφρόνως, which some translate wisely, some temperately, others soberly, but they will amount to one and the same thing; for as to its notation, the adjective σφρων, is derived, ἀπὸ τοῦ σώζειν τὴν φρένα, from preserving or keeping the mind: and so the virtue, σωφροσύνη, sobriety, is so called, because σώζει τὴν φρένα, it keeps the mind in its right frame and temper, and that is the proper notion of sobriety: for a man can then only be said to be sober, when his mind is serene, clear, and free from all disturbance and intoxication. And therefore

when the grace of God teacheth us to live soberly, it thereby enjoins us to avoid whatsoever may any way disturb or discompose our senses, reason, mind, or judgment, so as always to keep ourselves in an equal frame and disposition of spirit. And for that end it teacheth us to avoid,

1 All excess in meats and drinks: for gluttony and drunkenness do strangely affect the brain, distract the intellectuals, disorder the whole soul, so as to make it altogether unfit for any business either of our general or particular calling; and whensoever a man is so, he may be truly said to be drunk, even when by reason of excessive drinking, he is indisposed for any religious or civil duties, or at least, cannot set upon them, nor carry them on so well as he could before. This is the most certain and proper notion of drunkenness; and this is the reason why the Scripture all along condemns it for so heinous and great a sin, so odious and detestable both to God and man, because it unfits a man for the performance of those duties which he owes to both, depriving him for the present of that little reason which before he had, and so making him incapable of following any employment, or doing any work as he ought to do it, being indeed for the present more like a beast than man. And hence it is that the apostle here places sobriety in the fore-front, because unless a man be first sober in himself, he is not in a capacity of performing any acts of justice to his neighbour, or of piety towards God: and therefore he that would discharge his duty unto either, must be sure in the first place to avoid this first sort of drunkenness, which is contrary to sobriety, and to follow the apostle's rule, *not to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess*, Eph. v. 18.

2. He that would live soberly, must be sure to avoid all inordinate desire of, and love to, the things of this world, which have a strange kind of inebri-

ating quality in them, making men exactly like the brutes that perish, always looking downwards upon earth, and minding nothing but mire and dirt. This our Saviour himself forewarneth us of, saying, *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares*, Luke xxi. 34. where we may observe, he joins surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life together, as things equally overcharging the hearts of men, and making them so careless and negligent of their own good, that the day of judgment will take them unawares; so that over-caring for the world, that sin which we call covetousness, is but a sober kind of drunkenness, wherewith a man may be egregiously overtaken, or drunken, and yet be accounted sober, which is in a manner altogether as bad as being drunk with wine, and in some sense worse; for this kind of drunkenness usually continues far longer than the other, men being ordinarily intoxicated with the cares of this world all their life long, so as to be never sober, never moderate in the prosecution of their worldly designs, but are in a continual hurry and distraction, always unfit to look after heaven, because always poring upon earth, and doating upon the transient vanities here below. And therefore in order to our living soberly, it is necessary that our desires of this world be moderated and regulated by the rules of Scripture, and the dictates of right reason, that we never go higher than Agur's wish, *Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me*, Prov. xxx. 8.

3. In order to our living soberly, we must take care likewise to keep all our passions within their proper bounds and limits, and not suffer them to be unruly or exorbitant: for excessive love or hatred, joy or grief, or any other passion whatsoever, if it be once excessive, will as certainly disturb our reason

and prevent our judgment, as excessive drinking can ever do : as St. Hierom long ago observed, saying, That drunkenness doth not only consist in drinking wine, but it shews forth itself in other things ; for, saith he, among other things, *amore et odio mens inebriatur, et fluctuat ; et statum suum tenere non potest ;* By love and hatred the mind is intoxicated, and reels to and fro, and cannot keep its proper station. The same may be said of joy and grief, but especially of anger, which is indeed one of the worst sorts of intoxication, a kind of short frenzy or madness, whereby the senses of men are so much oppressed, and their rational faculty so vehemently disturbed, that their very countenances are changed, their eyes distorted, their whole bodies often discomposed, their souls be sure are always disabled from exercising any act of reason, much more of grace or virtue as they ought to do. Hence the apostle tells us, *that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*, James i. 20. that is, no man can perform any act of righteousness so long as wrath and anger is boiling in him ; for the man is not himself at present ; he cannot govern his tongue, nor any member of his body, much less can he exercise his reason so far as to perform acceptable obedience unto God, which requireth the greatest composure and settledness of mind that we can be possibly in. And therefore, so long as a man is in this condition, subject to the unwieldy power and tyranny of his headstrong passions, he can by no means be termed a sober man, being drunk with passion, and so doth not reach so far as the first duty which *the grace of God* here teacheth, even to live soberly.

4. The sobriety here spoken of, as it regulates our passions, so it moderates also our thoughts, especially of ourselves. It doth not suffer a man to be drunk or besotted with self-admiration and esteem, as many are, who have such high and over-weening conceits

of their own parts and gifts, and other seeming excellencies, that, like men in drink, they fancy themselves great, and good, and wise, far beyond any of their neighbours; which plainly argues that they have a kind of delirium in their brains, their reason being disturbed, and their fancy distracted with self-conceit. wherewith many are so strangely overcome, that they are not able to contain it, but vent it at their mouths by self-applause. But these are far from true sobriety, which always composeth and moderateth a man's thoughts, so that he looks upon himself as he is, even as a poor and worthless creature, as the greatest of all sinners, as St. Paul did, 1 Tim. i. 15. and therefore is still mean and vile in his own eyes, thinking every man better than himself. This is the lesson which *the grace of God* here teacheth, and which St. Paul taught by it, saying, *For I say, through the grace of God given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith,* Rom. xii. 3.

5. Give me leave to mention one more act of sobriety, which is too rare amongst us, and seldom thought of, and that is, sobriety in matters of religion. For there is a new kind of riot and drunkenness which hath intoxicated the age we live in: men being now grown so unstable and giddy in religion itself, that they reel to and fro, and stagger from one opinion to another, not able to walk steadily in the narrow path that leads to heaven. If we preach sound and wholesome doctrine to them, that these brain-sick persons cannot down with, they are for new words and phrases, new notions and speculations in divinity, by which means they soon turn sceptics in divine religion; which is the ready way to degenerate into downright atheists, and so to have no religion at all. This therefore *the grace of*

God here warns us to have a care of, enjoining us to live soberly, to bridle and restrain this looseness, extravagancy, and distraction of the mind about opinions in religion, and to be grave, staid, and sober in matters of such eternal concern as they are. As when Festus said to the great apostle of the Gentiles, *Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning hath made thee mad*; St. Paul replied with a great deal of gravity and moderation, *I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness*, Acts xxvi. 24, 25. so should it be with us; we ought not to be either sceptical or fanatical in religion; but should always speak and love to hear *the words of truth and soberness*, not tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, but firm, stedfast, and unmoveable in the main articles of our Christian faith. This is to live soberly indeed, in the business of the greatest importance that our sobriety can ever manifest itself in.

Thus you see what it is which *the grace of God* would have you do by teaching you to live soberly. It teacheth you to be temperate in the use of all creature-comforts, so as to avoid the very appearance of gluttony and drunkenness. It teacheth you to moderate your desires of, and love to, the things of this life. It teacheth you to keep your passions and affections all within their proper bounds and limits. It teacheth you to bring down all high and proud conceits of yourselves, and to think soberly and lowly of yourselves as you ought to think. It teacheth you to be well-grounded, grave, and sober in matters of religion, not to swallow down every new doctrine, opinion, and error that is broached among us, wherewith so many have been infatuated and made drunk. And verily, although this living soberly be but the first part of the lesson which *the grace of God* teacheth its disciples, yet he that hath learned this aright will find the other to be facile and

easy. For when a man hath once got the mastery over himself, so as to keep himself always in this even and sober frame, he will be rightly qualified and fitted for the performance of all just and righteous acts ; which *the grace of God* teacheth us in the next place to observe, even to live righteously as well as soberly.

Now as sobriety teacheth a man how to conform and behave himself within and to himself; righteousness, that shews him how to carry himself to others, especially his fellow-creatures, how to live and converse with them. And so it is indeed the bond and support of all human society; so that as without sobriety a man is a brute himself; so without righteousness, men would be as brutes to one another, devouring and being devoured of each other. For the prevention of which, *the grace of God* hath taught us how to deport and carry ourselves to one another. And all the rules which the Gospel lays down for this end, may be reduced to these three general heads, under which, all righteousness, strictly so called, as it respects men in any capacity whatsoever, are briefly, but fully comprehended.

1. *The grace of God*, revealed in the Gospel, teacheth every man to *love his neighbour as himself*, Matt. xxii. 39. yea, *that we love one another as Christ hath loved us*, John xv. 12. From whence it is easy to observe, that you are all obliged by the Gospel of Christ, and by *the grace of God* appearing in it, to have a real affection for, and to shew all expressions of love unto each other, both in word and deed, unto the utmost of your power, as Christ hath done to you : and by consequence, that you forgive all wrongs and injuries which you have or fancy yourselves to have received from one another ; that you retain no hatred, malice, or thoughts of revenge against each other ; that you study one another's good as you do your own, and endeavour to ad-

vance each other's both present and future welfare ; that you sympathize with one another in the various changes of this transient life, *rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep*; that you use all means to draw one another from wickedness and vice, and to entice and persuade each other into the practice of grace and virtue; that you pray and intercede for one another at the throne of grace, and be really thankful for mercies conferred on others, as well as for those you receive yourselves; that you be ready to distribute, willing to communicate to others' necessities, supplying their wants of your abundance; that you *consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works*, Heb. x. 24. that you do not entertain any evil opinion of your neighbours without a cause, but still account all others as better than yourselves; that you do not backbite or defame each other, but rather labour to keep up each other's good name and credit in the world; that you be faithful to any trust that others shall repose in you, and reveal no secrets that they commit unto you; that you prevent as much as in you lies any evil or mischief that you know to be falling upon others, and be as helpful and assistant as you can in procuring or advancing of their good. In a word, *the grace of God teacheth you that all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and that you be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*, Eph. iv. 31, 32.

2. *The grace of God teacheth you to render to all men their due; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*, Rom. xiii. 7. And so it teacheth, that you honour your superiors in order or degree, and obey the lawful commands of the magistrates which God hath set over you. That you submit to every ordi-

nance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them which are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well, 1 Pet. ii. 15, 16. That ye have a due respect and honour for all that are in power and authority over you; yea, *that you honour and esteem all men*, ver. 17. That you do not cheat, cozen, overreach, or defraud one another in any matter, 1 Thess. iv. 6. That you use not oppression, extortion, rapine, or any other unlawful means whereby to increase your own estate, to the diminution of another's. That you restore whatsoever you have unjustly, either by fraud or violence, taken from another. That you withhold not from the poor that just provision and maintenance which God hath put into your hands for them. That you neglect no opportunity of doing good to any man; but that as you have opportunity you do good to all men, especially to them *who are of the household of faith*, Gal. vi. 10. or, in brief, that you *owe no man any thing, but to love one another*, Rom. xiii. 8.

Lastly, *the grace of God* teacheth you to live righteously; it thereby enjoins you to model all your actions by that divine rule of our blessed Saviour, *that whatsoever you would that others should do to you, you do even so to them*, Matt. vii. 12. or, as we briefly phrase it, *that you always do as you would be done by*. That you do no more wrong to others, than you are willing to receive from them. That as you would have others do what good they can for you, so you do what good you can for others. That you injure no man in his soul, body, name, or estate, any more than you could be content to be injured yourselves. In a word, that you be as kind and courteous, as helpful and assistant, as true and trusty; as just and faithful unto all men, as you desire all men should be to you.

These are the general rules of righteousness and equity, which the Gospel commands you to walk by.

And as you cannot be thus righteous towards men, unless you be sober in yourselves, so neither can you be pious towards God, unless you be thus righteous towards men; and therefore the Gospel teaches us first to live soberly, then righteously, then godly. But it is not enough for us to live soberly and righteously, unless we live godly too; which is therefore placed last, because it is that which crowns the rest, and without which, neither our sobriety nor righteousness will stand us in any stead; and therefore it must needs very highly concern us to understand what it is which *the grace of God* would have us do, by teaching us to live godly. In searching into which, we had need be very cautious and circumspect; it being a thing which so many pretend to, and so few, so very few that ever arrive at it, and that not only amongst Jews, Turks, and Heathens, but even amongst Christians themselves; people being generally mistaken about the notion of godliness in general. Go among the papists, and there you will find them esteemed the most godly and pious persons, who say the most *Ave-Maria's* and *Pater-Noster's*, that bow the most reverently to images, and worship the host, or consecrated wafer, with the greatest devotion; as if godliness consisted only in some few superstitious rites and ceremonies; or, at the best, but in some few external acts and performances. Go among the enthusiasts, and there you will find godliness placed in raptures and ecstasies, in new revelations, and in the frequent repetition of Scripture phrases. Go among others, who boast themselves the godly party, and there you will find godliness asserted to consist principally in long extempore prayers, in frequent hearing of sermons, and receiving the sacrament without kneeling. Nay, there are too many among us, who have not been ashamed to abuse the sacred name of godliness, to palliate the most atrocious crimes, the most barba-

rous enormities, the most hellish enterprises, that ever the sons of men could be guilty of: no schism in the church, no sedition in the state, no rebellion itself being ever contrived or carried on but under the pretence of godliness: all which can certainly be ascribed to nothing else but to the gross ignorance that is in the world, concerning the true nature of godliness; which certainly is a thing of an higher nature, and more divine stamp, than such deluded mortals would make it. And therefore, that you may not fall into the same error and danger as others have done before you, fancying themselves to be godly when they are not, I shall endeavour, as plainly as I can, to clear up your apprehensions concerning the nature of true godliness, that you may all understand what really it is to live godly in this present world.

For which end we must first know in general, that the word here translated *godly*, is εὐσεβῶς, and where-soever in the New Testament you read of godliness, in the original it is εὐσεβεία, or θεοσεβεία; which, according to its notation or etymology, properly signifies true worship, or the worshipping of God, or, if you will, right worshipping of the true God. And therefore seeing it is by words that we come to the true notion of things, and the Holy Ghost always uses this word to express that which we call godliness; hence it follows, that when we speak of godliness, we must not restrain to some few particular acts, but look upon it as comprehending the whole system of all those duties, which we as creatures owe to him that made us, and in the due performance whereof our worship and adoration of him consisteth; so that he that worships God aright, may be justly termed a godly man, and no man else can be properly called by that name. And therefore if we would not be mistaken in a matter of such con-

sequence as this is, in order to our finding out what real godliness is, we must search into the true nature of divine worship, and seriously consider with ourselves what it is in a Scripture sense to worship God.

Now if we consult the Scriptures to know wherein the worship of God doth principally consist, we may easily find that as God hath made both our souls and bodies, so he expects that we should worship him in both, according to their several capacities; and by consequence, that there are two sorts of acts wherein godliness in general consisteth: the one external, performed by the body together with the soul; the other internal, performed by the soul without the body.

For, first, nothing can be more plain and certain, than that God in Scripture requires some kind of external or bodily worship from us, whereby to testify our acknowledgment of his sovereignty over us, as likewise of our dependence upon, and submission unto, him; insomuch, that it is very observable, all the words that are ever used to express our worshipping of God, in the Old Testament, they properly and primarily signify our outward gesture and deportment before him. For there are but three words that the Holy Ghost ever makes use of there to this purpose; and they are *כרע*, *גרע*, and *תשהחזה*, whereof the one signifies the bending of our knees; the other the bowing of our heads with the upper part of our bodies, and the last the prostration of ourselves upon the ground, with our hands spread out before him. And it would be very strange if God should use no other words to express his worship than what denote the reverential postures of our bodies, and yet should require no bodily worship at all from us; which is such a blind and groundless conceit, that I may confidently assert, that whosoever entertains it, never understood the true meaning and purport of the second commandment, wherein God expressly enjoins

us not to bow or fall down before any image or idol ; which certainly he would never have done, had not that been an essential part of his own worship. And if it be no part of divine worship to kneel, bow, or fall down before God, neither can any man be said to worship an idol, by kneeling, bowing, or falling down before it ; but seeing God hath expressly forbidden us to do so to an idol, he hath thereby as expressly enjoined us to worship him after that manner. And verily, had he never enjoined it to us, yet the very law of nature would teach us the same thing. For if we really fear and dread the presence but of an earthly prince, we cannot but express it some way or other before him. How much more shall we sanctify the Lord of hosts himself by our reverential deportment in his presence, if he be our only fear, and our only dread, as he ought to be ! Insomuch, that for my own part, I think, that man must have a great deal more charity than now is usual in the world, that can think or believe that such persons truly fear God, who can sit as confidently before him, and speak as malapertly to him, as if he was their fellow-creature. If this be to worship God, I must confess myself altogether ignorant of what it is to worship him. For if I know any thing of God, and of that service and honour which is due unto him, we that live, and move, and have our being in him, ought to be possessed with such an awe and dread, such a fear and reverence of him, as not to dare to carry ourselves irreverently or unseemly in his presence ; especially while he is speaking unto us, or we to him. Yea, whatsoever duty we perform either to or for him, if we would have it to be acceptable to him, we must perform it *with reverence and godly fear*, Heb. xii. 28. And the reason which the apostle there gives is, because *our God is a consuming fire*, ver. 29. And verily, he that rightly knows, seriously considers,

and clearly apprehends that, even that *God is a consuming fire*, that he is a great and glorious, an infinitely powerful, almighty, and terrible Being, such a one cannot but express his fear and reverence of him in all his approaches to him; he cannot be like the proud Pharisee, who had the impudence to talk as malapertly with God as if he had been his fellow, and to say, *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, nor even as this publican*, Luke xviii. 11. Where he had the confidence to tell God a lie to his face, in saying that himself was not so unjust as the Publican, that stood by, when Christ himself saith afterwards, that the Publican went home justified rather than he: and why did he so, but by reason of his reverence and humble deportment before God? for he stood *afar off*, and would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, ver. 13. so that he testified his inward fear and dread of God, by his outward carriage and behaviour before him. And if any of you desire to manifest yourselves to be truly godly indeed, you must be sure to lay aside all carelessness and indifferency, much more all irreverence and rudeness, in the presence and worship of God; and to perform all your devotions to him with all the modesty and humility, with all the reverence and solemnity that possibly you can, as becometh those who believe themselves to be engaged in the highest acts that they are or can be capable of performing.

How you ought to express your inward fear of God by your outward deportment before him, I shall not undertake to determine, or rather I need not do it. For I dare confidently assert, that he that truly fears God, will be so far from thinking these solemn gestures prescribed by our church in divine worship to be either superfluous or superstitious, that he will rather conclude them to be essen-

tial parts of the worship of God, and that they naturally flow from, and necessarily follow upon, the true fear and reverence of the eternal God wheresoever it is.

But though, in order to our worshipping God aright, and by consequence to our being truly godly, it is necessary that we behave ourselves thus solemnly and reverently in his presence and service, yet we must not think that this is all that is required of us ; for indeed, it is nothing at all without those other sort of acts, wherein, as I told you, godliness consisteth, even the internal acts of the soul, from whence these outward performances of the body do or ought to flow. And what these are, we come now to consider. And I shall endeavour to explain them so clearly unto you, that none of you but for the future may know what it really is to be godly.

First therefore : to your being or living godly, it is indispensably required that your minds be possessed with a due sense of God, with right, and, if possible, clear conceptions of him, so as not only to be able to talk or discourse of God as he is the Creator, the Preserver, Governor, Possessor, and Disposer of all things in the world ; for that a wicked and ungodly man may do as well, and perhaps far better than he that is truly pious. For we may find by our own experience, that we may utter many things with our mouths which we do not rightly apprehend, nor have any true sense of them in our hearts. And therefore, although it be necessary that we have such a knowledge of God as to be able to discourse of what he is, and hath done, and still doth in the world, yet the bare theory or speculation of such things cannot be reckoned amongst the acts of true godliness ; because not only ungodly men, but the devils themselves go so far, and yet remain ungodly and devils still. But that knowledge of God which is the first act of godliness, and that

whereupon all the rest are grounded, although it presupposeth right notions and conceptions of the divine perfections, yet it consisteth principally in a due sense of God upon the heart. What that is, I must confess myself unable to express, so as that any one should apprehend it but they that have it : but only in general we may call it an experimental knowledge, whereby a man hath the sense or experience of these perfections upon his own heart, which he knows and believes to be in God, whereby his thoughts and conceptions are so strangely enlarged, that he seems to apprehend him that is altogether incomprehensible, so that he is no longer able to endure himself, but is forced to cry out with Job, in the same case, *by reason of God's highness I cannot endure*, Job xxx. 23. This is that knowledge of God, which the Scripture so often enjoins, whereby a man sensibly apprehends, and contemplates the great God as the first of all Beings, the cause of all causes, the chiefest of all goods, the source of all happiness, and the centre of all perfections ; as one whose nature is so pure, whose glory is so transcendent, whose wisdom is so incomprehensible, whose power is so boundless, and all whose perfections are so high, so glorious, so infinite and eternal, that our highest apprehensions of him are still infinitely below him. And when once a man hath attained to such a sense of God as this is, all other acts of piety will be facile and easy to him : for indeed he cannot but exert them. For,

Secondly, another act of godliness, and a great one too, *is to love the Lord your God with all your souls*, Matt. xxii. 37 that is, to choose him as your chiefest good, and prefer him in your choicest affections before all things in the world besides ; to look upon riches, pleasures, honours, health, strength, life, liberty, and all things else, as less than nothing, and vanity in comparison of so glorious and infinite

a good as he is. But he that knows God, as I have shewn you ought to do, cannot choose but love him before all things else ; for he that apprehends God as his chiefest good, must love him too under the same notion. And therefore, so long as your affections are entangled among your creature-comforts, enjoyments, and relations, so as to be fixed upon them more than upon God, you are far as yet from being godly, far from worshipping God as ye ought to do, because you give to the creature the highest honour and worship which is due to God, even your hearts, your love, and affection. And, by consequence, as you ever desire to learn and practise the lesson which the grace of God here teacheth, you must be sure to gather up all your scattered affections from all things upon earth, and raise and unite them upon him that made them, and who therefore made them that himself alone might have them.

Thirdly, the sacred fire of divine love being thus enkindled in your breasts, it must break forth into ardent desires after him whom your souls love. You must not think that you love God before all things else, so long as you desire any thing else before him ; until you can say with David, *Whom have I in heaven but thee ? neither is there any thing that I desire upon earth in comparison of thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 25. And it being natural for us to labour for that which we desire, yea, so that our endeavours after it are always proportionable to our desires of it ; hence, as we are to desire, so we are to seek God before all things else, and to make use of all means that lead to the enjoyment of him ; so as always to follow our Saviour's rule, to *seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness* in the first place, Matt. vi. 33. And he that always doth so, may be properly said to live godly.

Fourthly, as our love is to be fixed upon, and our desires to be carried after, so is our joy to be placed in God alone, so as to make him the only object of

all our happiness and felicity. We must not think to find any true joy or comfort there where God was never pleased to put it, even in any creature whatsoever: but we must always rejoice in God, and in him alone, both when we have and when we have not any thing else to rejoice in, still observing the apostle's command, *to rejoice in the Lord always*, Phil. iv. 4.

Fifthly, but we are so to rejoice in the Lord as to make him the only object of our fear too, fearing nothing in the world so much as his anger and displeasure against us. This is the way whereby himself hath commanded us to sanctify him the Lord of hosts, by making him our only fear and our only dread: *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself*, saith the prophet; *let him be your fear, let him be your dread*, Isa. viii. 13. And verily this is so great a part of godliness, that in the Old Testament it is frequently, yea constantly, put for the whole, godliness there being generally termed the fear of God. And so in the language our Saviour spake, there is no other word for godliness but only *θεοσεβεια*, the fear of God; so that no man can be said to be godly but he that fears God; and whosoever fears God may be justly said to be a godly man; yea he is therefore a godly man because he fears God; but he that fears God, dares not but obey his commandments.

Sixthly, hence in the sixth place, in order to your being godly, it is necessary that you obey all the commands of God. I do not say it is necessary only to do what God commands, but you must therefore do it because God commands it, otherwise you cannot be said to obey him in the doing of it. And whatsoever you do in obedience unto God, you thereby make it an act of godliness or of piety towards God, although the matter of the act be not referred immediately unto him; *ex. gr.* When you give an alms to the poor, if you do it out of pure

obedience unto God, though the alms you give respect the poor, and so it is an act of justice or charity; yet your giving it after that manner makes it an act of piety towards God, and an high one too, in that your eye is fixed upon God's commands, at the same time that your hand is stretched out to relieve the poor. And by this means, not only our praying, and hearing, and the like, but every act of our life both may and ought to be an act of godliness; for all our actions are to be according to God's command, and we are to do them only upon that account, because they are so; and whatsoever we thus do in obedience to God, cannot but be a godly act.

Seventhly, but there is still another act of godliness behind, without which all the rest will cease to be so, and that is, believing and trusting in God, and in such promises as he hath made unto us in Jesus Christ: for that trusting in God is really a duty incumbent upon all, can be denied by none that believe the Scriptures, wherein we are as expressly commanded to *trust in the Lord with all our hearts*, as to love him with all our hearts, Prov. iii. 5. But all the ground that we have to trust and depend upon God, is only because he hath made several promises of good things unto us, and sealed them also in the blood of his only Son; and therefore he expects and commands that we take his word for what he hath said, and depend upon him for the fulfilling of it; as believing him to be both infinitely wise, faithful, and able to perform whatsoever he hath promised. And whosoever doth not thus believe in him, so as to trust and rely upon what he hath said, it is plain that he suspects either his faithfulness to his promise, or else his ability to perform it: which cannot but be acknowledged one of the greatest sins that we can possibly be guilty of. And so on the other side, our trusting in him is certainly one of the highest acts of godliness that we can possibly exert: yea, it is that which the Scripture lays so

much stress upon, that without it no other acts of godliness can be accepted of as such by God: for we cannot but be conscious to ourselves that the best acts of piety that we can perform are very defective, and fraught with many sinful infirmities, and so in themselves are not really good and pious acts. But God in his Gospel hath been pleased to promise us, that if we do but sincerely endeavour to perform them as well as we can, and trust in him and his promise for it, he will pardon our defects, and accept of what we do for Christ Jesus' sake: which trusting in Jesus Christ, or the promises made in him, is that act of faith to which our justification or acceptance in the Gospel is so frequently ascribed, and which in the Old Testament is called *trusting in the Lord*, in the New, *believing in Jesus Christ*; upon which our eternal salvation is expressly said to depend; because nothing that we do can be accepted of without Jesus Christ, nor by him neither, without trusting on those promises which are made and confirmed in him. And therefore, in order to our living so as we are here commanded, even a godly life, or such a life as may be accepted of as godly, it is absolutely necessary, that to the other acts of godliness before mentioned, we add this of trusting in God, which alone crowns all the rest, and renders them acceptable in Jesus Christ.

Thus now I have shewn you how you may and ought to lead not only a sober and righteous, but also a godly life, as the grace of God here teacheth you to do; which you may do by keeping your hearts and minds continually possessed with a due sense and awful apprehensions of God, by loving him with all your hearts, by desiring him above all things else, by rejoicing in him as your chiefest good, by making him your only fear and your only dread, by obeying to the utmost of your power whatsoever he hath commanded you; and when you have done all, trusting only on the promises which

he hath made in Christ, for your pardon and acceptance: these are the things which the grace of God requires of you in teaching you to live godly. And need I now use any more arguments to persuade you to the practice of what you have now heard? I hope I need not; for I know I speak to none but rational and understanding persons, who are all capable both of knowing and doing whatsoever I have been speaking of, yea, and who hope and expect too ere long to go to heaven. But give me leave to ask you seriously, as in the presence of God, how do any of you think to get thither? Do you ever look to go to heaven any other way than that which God himself hath prescribed in his holy word? Is it not by the grace of God in Jesus Christ that you expect your sins shall be pardoned, and your souls saved? But what! doth not this very grace of God, from which you expect these glorious things, expressly teach you to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world? With what confidence then can you expect to receive the blessings which the grace of God hath promised to you, if you will not perform those duties which it requireth of you? No, do not deceive yourselves, there is not one duty which the grace of God here enjoins you, and which I have endeavoured this day to explain unto you, but you must do it, or never come to heaven. And therefore let me beg of you to dally no longer in a matter of such consequence, but devote yourselves wholly to the practice of these duties, for nothing less than your eternal welfare depends upon it; for these are the Gospel-terms upon which your salvation depends; and unless you come up to them, I dare assure you, that although you be called, you will never be chosen. And therefore be advised to set upon these great duties before it be too late; otherwise, remember my words, you will one day wish you had, but then wishing will do no good.

SERMON XCII.

HOLINESS THE GREAT DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION.

TITUS ii. 13.

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

THE apostle, in the words immediately foregoing these, acquaints us with the great mystery of man's salvation by the *grace of God*, together with the doctrine which the same grace teacheth all those to whom it brings salvation. *The grace of God*, saith he, *which brings salvation hath appeared to all men*, ver. 11. That is, God's infinite love and mercy to mankind in sending his Son into the world to die for us, it is that which hath brought salvation to us, not so as to exclude either Christ's satisfaction for us, or our obedience unto God ; but so that our salvation is still to be ultimately resolved into God's grace, and ascribed to his infinite mercy and compassion to fallen man, as it is revealed to us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ ; which hath now appeared to all men, putting them into a way how they may be recovered from the state of sin and misery, into a state of grace and eternal salvation, by the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

This therefore is that saving grace of God whereby every soul here present may attain to everlasting

bliss and happiness ; but in order to your partaking of it, it is indispensably required, that you observe what *the grace of God teacheth*, as well as what it hath promised to you.

But what is it which *the grace of God* here teacheth you to do? Why it teacheth you, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, you should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. The meaning of which words in brief is, that that grace by which alone it is possible for you to be saved, teacheth you to deny, renounce, and forsake whatsoever is offensive unto God, or contrary to his law and nature ; that you do not blaspheme his name, nor profane his sabbaths, nor despise his ordinances, nor abuse his mercies, nor slight his judgments, nor mistrust his promises, nor carry yourselves irreverently in his presence. It teacheth you also to deny, avoid, and hate all worldly lusts, whether the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, or the pride of life ; to keep yourselves within the bounds of modesty and temperance ; neither ambitious of the honours, desirous of the pleasures, nor covetous of the riches of this transient world. It teacheth you to live soberly, that is, to avoid all excess in eating and drinking, so as never to overcharge your bodies, distemper your brains, nor discompose yourselves for the works either of your general or particular calling ; that you avoid all inordinate desires of, and love to, the things of this life ; that you keep your passions all within their proper limits, and never suffer them to be either unruly or exorbitant ; that you have moderate and sober thoughts of yourselves, so as never to be drunk or besotted with self-applause, or admiration : as also that you be well grounded, grave, and sober in matters of religion, not reeling to and fro from one opinion to another ; but remain firm and stedfast, especially to the fundamental articles of the Christian faith. It teacheth you likewise to

live righteously, that is, to love your neighbour as yourselves, to render to all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, and honour to whom honour ; as also that you model all your civil actions by that golden rule prescribed by our blessed Saviour, *that whatsoever you would that others should do to you, do you even so to them.* It teacheth you, lastly, to live godly too ; that is, that you sincerely perform all such duties as you owe immediately to God that made you ; that you serve him with a perfect heart and willing mind, and worship him with reverence and godly fear ; that you have a due sense and awful apprehensions of him, and love him with all your hearts and souls, with all your might and mind ; that you desire his love and favour, and rejoice in his presence and service more than all things in the world besides ; that you fear nothing so much as his displeasure, and therefore obey whatsoever he hath commanded ; and when you have done all, to trust only in his promises which he hath made in Christ, for the pardon of your sins, and the acceptance of what you do. These, these are the great lessons which *the grace of God* that bringeth salvation teacheth, and requires you all to learn and practise.

Now the apostle having thus shewn what it is which *the grace of God* revealed in the Gospel enjoins us, and knowing how backward we are to the performance of such duties as these are ; he here in the next place presents us with the best means, the highest motives, and the strongest encouragement that he can, to set ourselves in good earnest upon it ; and that is to consider that transcendent glory and happiness which they shall hereafter have, who *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world : looking, saith he, for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ : that is, in brief, expecting that blessedness which*

we hope for when the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ shall appear in glory.

The words being thus brought in, it is easy to gather and observe several things from them :~but I shall instance only in three things, wherein the scope and substance of the words is briefly contained, from those words. Therefore we may observe,

I. That Jesus Christ our Saviour is the great God.

II. That this great God shall one day appear in glory.

III. That the blessed hope which we look for at the glorious appearance of Christ, should encourage and excite us to *live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*. Of these three things therefore I shall speak in the same order wherein I here propounded them, beginning with that which is placed last in my text ; but must be first explained, because it makes way for the other two.

First therefore ; I observe from hence that our blessed Saviour is really and truly God, being here called the great God. For his appearance is here said to be *the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. Indeed, whatsoever is necessary to be known concerning our blessed Saviour is briefly couched under these words ; both his natures, his office, and his unction, or ordination to that office, being contained in them. His human nature is intimated in his name *Jesus* ; for so he was named when he was born of the Virgin Mary, called therefore *Jesus of Nazareth* : his divine nature is here asserted in his being called, *the great God*. His office is implied in his being our Saviour, *the great God and our Saviour*. Not only Saviour in general, but our Saviour in particular ; that is, the Saviour of mankind. And then his unction or ordination to this office is plainly signified by his name *Christ*, that is, *anointed*, and so ordained by God to be the Saviour of mankind. But not to insist upon the other ; the principal thing I desire you here to observe is the divinity of our blessed Saviour,

plainly and expressly here asserted. For nothing can be more clear than that he is here called, *the great God; the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*; where the great God cannot be understood of any other but of our Saviour Jesus Christ; and that for two reasons.

First, in the Greek text, one and the same article serves both these predicates, τοῦ μεγάλου Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν, not καὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν; which we therefore rightly translate of the great God, and our Saviour; not of the great God and of our Saviour, as if the great God, and our Saviour, were here two distinct persons; for the Greek idiom would not admit of such an interpretation; constantly requiring that where one only article is used in common to two predicates, they be both referred to the same subjects; and, by consequence, that it is Jesus Christ alone who is here called both the great God, and our Saviour.

But that you may not think that the divinity of Christ can be proved from this place only, upon so nice a criticism as an article, I desire you to observe in the second place, that the glorious appearing here spoken of, is likewise an undeniable demonstration of it. For we never read in Scripture of the glorious appearing of God the Father, but only of Jesus Christ, whose second coming in glory to judge the world is called his glorious appearing; or, ἐπιφάνεια τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ, the appearance of his glory. But here is express mention made of the glorious appearing of the great God; which therefore cannot be understood of any other, but of that great God who is likewise our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Nothing therefore can be more plain than that our blessed Saviour is here called the great God; or, as St. Chrysostom observes, οὐ πρὸς τὶ μέγας φησιν, ἀλλ' ἀπολύτως μέγας; he doth not say relatively great, but absolutely great, none being greater than he. And

therefore he cries out, Ποῦ οἱ εἰσὶν τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐλάττονα τὸν Υἱὸν λέγοντες; Where are they that say the Son is less than the Father? seeing he is here absolutely called the great God. Hence Athanasius useth this place against the Arians, to prove, ὅτι μέγας Θεὸς ἐκλήθη ὁ Υἱός, that the Son is called the great God. And so do the other fathers, both Greek and Latin, frequently produce these words to prove that the Son is not only God, but the same great and almighty God that the Father is.

And verily was there no other place in all the Scriptures whereupon to ground this the fundamental article of our Christian faith, this to any sober and unprejudiced person would be sufficient. However, to confirm you still more in this great truth, lest, living in such a sceptical and wavering age as this is, you should be persuaded to doubt of it, I desire you to consider, that the same names, the same properties, the same works, and the same worship which is ascribed to the Father, is likewise frequently in holy Scripture given to the Son: so that he that denies the Son to be God, may as well deny that we have any reason to believe the Father to be so. And therefore, if this be once proved, you will have as clear a demonstration of the divinity of Christ, as the nature of the thing is capable of. But now to prove this,

1. I say the names that are given to the Father, are ascribed also to the Son in the holy Scriptures. For, is the Father called God? so is the Son: for *in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*, John i. 1. So also, Acts xx. 28. *which he*, that is, which God, *hath purchased with his own blood*, which cannot possibly be understood of any but God the Son. Is the Father the true God? so is the Son, 1 John v. 20. Is the Father *over all*, *God blessed for ever*? so is the Son, Rom. ix. 5. Is the Father called the Lord? so is

the Son, John xx. 28. Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. Isai. xl. 3. John i. 23.

2. The same properties or perfections which are attributed to the Father, are attributed likewise to the Son. Is the Father eternal? so is the Son, Rev. i. 17, 18. Is the Father omniscient? so is the Son; *he knoweth all things*, John xxi. 17. Is the Father omnipresent, or every where present? so is the Son, *For, wheresoever, where but two or three, saith he, are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, Matt. xviii. 20. which is impossible he should be, was not he present every where. Is the Father omnipotent, or the almighty God? so is the Son, Rev. i. 8.

3. The same works also which the Father is said to do, are ascribed likewise to the Son. Did the Father make all things? so did the Son: *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*, John i. 3. Col. i. 16. Doth the Father preserve and uphold all things? so doth the Son; *he upholdeth all things by the word of his power*, Heb. i. 3. *and by him all things consist*, Col. i. 17. Doth the Father forgive sins? that certainly none can do but God, and yet the Son doth so too, Mark ii. 5, 7.

4. The same honour and worship which is due to the Father, ought to be given to the Son too. Are we obliged to believe in God the Father? so are we bound to believe in the Son too, John xiv. 1. Is the Father to be worshipped by all creatures? so is the Son, even by the angels themselves, Heb. i. 6. inso-much that our Saviour tells us, *that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John v. 23. *and as we pray to the Father, so are we to pray to the Son too*, Luke xvii. 3. Acts vii. 59.

Many other arguments might be produced for the confirmation of this great truth, even that our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ really is, as he is here called, the great God: for I think it is impossible that so

high a truth as this is, should be expressed more clearly in the holy Scriptures than this is expressed. Howsoever, the arguments already produced may suffice to confirm any impartial, unprejudiced, sober, and considerate person in the truth, that Jesus Christ is really the same great and eternal God as the Father is, and, by consequence, co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal with the Father; which being once acknowledged, it will easily be granted, that there is a trinity of persons in the divine nature; for no man ever denied the one, that believed the other. Neither indeed can any one in reason deny a trinity of persons in the Godhead, that acknowledgeth the Godhead of the Son: for the Father and the Son being both divine persons, the Holy Ghost must needs be so too, he being still associated with them; as where St. Paul saith, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all*, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. where we have all the three persons distinctly mentioned. As also in the institution of the sacrament of baptism, where our blessed Saviour expressly commands his apostles, saying, *Go ye therefore and teach, or disciple, all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, Matt. xxviii. 19. Which words I cannot but wonder how any man can read, and yet deny or doubt of a trinity of divine persons; seeing the sacrament of baptism itself, whereby we are all initiated into the Christian religion by Christ's own institution, is to be administered in the name of three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: for how can any man imagine that two other persons should be joined with the Father, in one of the highest acts of divine worship, even baptism itself, if they were not really and truly divine persons as well as he; or if they were not one and the same God with him himself? For although there be a trinity of persons in

the Godhead, yet we must still believe there is but one Godhead in that trinity, according to St. John's words, *there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one*, 1 John v. 7. that is, though they be three persons, they are still but one God; one in nature, one in power, one in wisdom, one in glory, one in all manner of perfections whatsoever; so that all three, and every one of the three, is that one glorious, eternal, supreme, and universal Being, which we call God.

So much may suffice for the first observation I presented you from these words, even that Jesus Christ our Saviour is the great God. The next thing to be considered is, that this great God will one day appear in glory: *Looking for that blessed hope, saith the apostle, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* For the opening of which, we must know there is a twofold appearing of Christ; the one is, ἐπιφάνεια τῆς χάριτος, the appearing of his grace, spoken of ver. 11 the other is, ἐπιφάνεια τῆς δόξης, the appearing of his glory, mentioned here. His first coming was with great lowliness and humility, the second will be with great majesty and glory; concerning which his glorious appearing the angels certified the apostles, Acts i. 11. *In like manner*, that is, as he was carried to heaven in a cloud, so shall he come down in a cloud again, and that *with power and great glory*, as himself tells us, Matt. xxiv. 30. The angels also, and the archangels shall attend upon him, and be both his heralds and trumpeters, 1 Thess. iv. 16. At which time, to manifest his great power and glory to all the world, he will do these things, which we shall all be then eye-witnesses of, and not only we, but all, both angels and men.

1. He will by his almighty power raise the dead; so that whatsoever human bodies were ever endowed with a rational soul, how long soever they have been

scattered into dust and atoms, shall then be reduced to their ancient form again; every particle being fetched from the remote places, where they have been dispersed, and hastening into the same places where before they were, so as to compose the self-same individual bodies which before they did. This our Saviour himself hath told us of beforehand, assuring us, *that all that are in their graves shall then hear his voice*, John v. 28. xi. 43.

2. All mankind that ever did or shall live upon the face of the earth, and carried again into it, being then raised from their graves; they, together with such as shall be then alive, shall be gathered together before Christ, without any distinction of ages, sex, conditions, languages, or estates; they shall all be equally summoned, and stand upon the same ground before him that shall then sit as Judge both of quick and dead: for himself hath told us, *that when he, the Son of man, shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations*, Matt. xxv. 31, 32.

3. All nations being thus assembled before him, he shall review every man's actions that he ever did, together with the very thoughts that ever sprang up in his heart, and the words that ever proceeded out of his mouth: then shall your secret sins be laid open, and the very thoughts of your heart be made as manifest as the most notorious actions of your whole life; for nothing can be hid from that all-seeing Judge that then will sit upon the bench; for he hath all the thoughts, the words, and actions of your whole life written in the book of his omniscience, which your own consciences shall then give witness to, either for or against yourselves. This St. John had long ago revealed to him, when he *saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the*

book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works, Rev. xx. 12, 13. And what St. John then saw in a vision, you shall see ere long with your own eyes; for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 10.

4. Your actions being all thus scanned, and your lives examined by the word of God, before this great God at his glorious appearing, he will then pass a final and irrevocable sentence upon all persons. Such as have truly repented of their sins and believed in the Gospel, they being accepted of as righteous by the merits of Jesus Christ, shall have that blessed sentence pronounced upon them, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, Matt. xxv. 34.* The righteous being thus cleared from all indictments brought against them, they shall then with joy and triumph see the condemnation of the wicked world, even all impenitent and unbelieving persons, who, having nothing to plead for themselves, will be soon found guilty, and will therefore have that dreadful sentence passed upon them, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, Matt. xxv. 41.* Sentence being thus passed, it will be accordingly executed: for *these, the wicked, shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal, ver. 46.* These are the great things which Christ shall do at his glorious appearing, and which shall make his appearing seem so glorious.

The third thing which I promised to shew from these words is, that that blessed hope which we look for at the glorious appearance of Christ, should excite and encourage us *all to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* For this is the great ar-

gument which the apostle here useth, why we should learn and practise the lesson which *the grace of God* here teacheth, even to *live soberly, righteously, and godly*; because we look for so much happiness and felicity, when Christ shall appear in glory: *looking*, saith he, *for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God*; that is, looking for or expecting that blessedness we hope for at the glorious appearing of Christ; for the blessed hope is here put for the blessedness we hope for.

Now in speaking unto this, we must first consider what that blessedness is which we hope for, and which shall certainly be conferred upon all those in the world to come that live soberly, righteously, and godly in this; and then we shall easily shew how the expectation of so great a blessedness should put us upon the diligent and unwearied prosecution of true grace and virtue in this present world, as the only way whereby it is possible to attain unto it.

As to the first, you must not expect that I should give you a perfect description of that transcendent glory and happiness which is prepared in the world to come for all those that truly love and fear, honour and obey God in this; I being as unable to express what it is to you, as I am desirous to experience what it is in myself. Alas! we poor mortals upon earth, that ordinarily converse with nothing but dirt and clay, cannot here behold the glory that shines above yonder glorious sun: alas! we cannot so much as begin to look upon it, but our eyes are immediately dazzled; how then shall we be able to give a full description of it? No, that is more than can be expected from any one that was never there: that was never there did I say? nay, I much question whether it be possible for them that are there, to express it to our capacities; or rather, I believe it altogether impossible: though they feel it in themselves, they cannot tell it unto others. How much

less can we, who never yet enjoyed it, be able to declare it fully unto others? Howsoever, that I may give you what light I can into it, I shall endeavour to intimate unto you what conceptions myself do and you may entertain of it, that so you may be the more excited to look after it with all your might and main, and, by consequence, to walk in the narrow path that leads unto it.

First, therefore, so soon as ever any of you should be got to heaven, you will be immediately freed from whatsoever is evil.

1. You shall there be freed from the evil of sin, which is indeed the evil of all other evils; and if ye be true penitents, it cannot but be the greatest trouble you have in the world that you are guilty, and still subject unto sin. But if you be once acquitted from your sins before Christ's judgment-seat, and declared righteous by God himself, you shall be no more grieved at the remembrance of your former sins, nor groan under the insupportable weight and burden of them; but shall be as if you had never sinned at all. Here it cannot but make your hearts even sink within you to consider how ungrateful you have been to him that made you, and how heinously you have transgressed those righteous laws which he hath been pleased to enjoin you; the remembrance whereof cannot but sometimes make you cry out in the bitterness of your souls, Woe unto us that we have sinned. But when once you are got to heaven, all tears, even of repentance itself, shall be wiped from your eyes; for your sins shall all be blotted out, and your transgressions remembered no more, neither by God, so as to punish you, nor yet by yourselves, so as to be troubled for them; but you shall be as perfectly freed from them both in the court of heaven, as also of your own consciences, as if you had never been guilty of them, nor defiled with them.

And yet this is not all neither ; for you will not only be there freed from the guilt, but also from the strength and filth of sin. As no transgression shall be imputed to you, so neither shall any corruption remain in you. So long as you are in the flesh, the flesh will be in you, *there being not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not*, Eccles. vii. 20. And if your hearts be truly converted and inclined to God, it cannot but be an exceeding grief and trouble to you, that you cannot obey and serve him with such a perfect heart, and a willing mind, as you ought and desire to do. But our comfort is, that when we come to heaven, as all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, so shall all sin be banished from our souls too. There will be no darkness in your minds, nor error in your judgments ; no distraction in your thoughts, nor corruption in your conscience ; no perverseness in your wills, nor disorder in your passions ; no spot, no blot, no blemish, nor imperfection in your whole souls : but your souls will be all made *the spirits of just men made perfect*, Heb. xii. 23. And he that thinks not this an extraordinary happiness indeed, it is because he knows not as yet what true happiness is. For this is certainly the ground and foundation of all the happiness that we either are or can be capable of ; for until our souls be thus freed from their infirmities, and reduced to their primitive and perfect frame and constitution, they are not in a capacity of enjoying the chiefest good, nor, by consequence, of being happy. Neither doth this our freedom from sin, qualify us only for the enjoyment of happiness ; but it is itself too one great part of the happiness we desire to enjoy, it being no small part of happiness to be free from misery ; which none can be that is not void of sin ; but he that is void of sin, cannot but be upon that very account free from misery ; sin being the only cause of all the misery in the world. And therefore it must needs rejoice our

hearts to think of heaven, when we consider that we shall there ride triumphant over all those sins, which we are here so continually molested, and frequently foiled by: the consideration whereof should make us, methinks, if it were lawful, even to envy the blessed estate of the glorified saints in heaven; or at least it should make us think the time long till we come to them, that as they now are, so we may be rid of all our lusts, freed from the tyranny of our headstrong corruptions, and made in our capacity holy as God is holy, and perfect as he is perfect. Oh! who can but long and thirst after such a transcendent happiness as this is! especially considering, that being freed from the evil of sin, we cannot but be freed from the evil of punishment too: for these two are inseparable companions; for no man is punished for any thing but sin: and therefore he that is absolved from all sin, must needs be discharged from bearing any punishment whatsoever. And yet this is the happy and blessed condition of all such as are in heaven; whither, if any of you shall go, as I hope you all will, as you will not be guilty of any sin, so neither will you be obnoxious to any punishment or misery whatsoever. And so,

1 You will be there free from care and fear about the things of this world. For you will be no sooner got up to heaven, but you will presently trample upon all things here below, and look upon them as below you to look upon. I need not tell you what care you have all upon you for the concernments of this life; how desirous you are about the getting, how solicitous about the keeping, how fearful of losing the impertinent trifles of this transient world; what pains you take about them, running to and fro, from one place to another, in order either to get more, or else to keep what you have got already; you cannot but be all sensible of it, being I fear, for the most part, too subject to this misery of your own

creating. But when once you arrive at the haven of eternal happiness, all this stir and bustle about such fading varieties, will immediately cease and disappear. You will then trouble your heads no more about such low and pitiful toys as these are, which perisheth in the using; for you will then see yourselves so fully provided for, that you need not concern yourselves, nor take care for the future; for you will have as much as you can desire: as much did I say? yea, and infinitely more too. And how great a happiness it will be to be freed from such cares and fears as you now have upon you, I need not tell you. I fear many of you know it but too well by your own experience, what miseries the men of this world undergo for the concerns of it; rack-ing their brains, distempering their bodies, hazarding their lives, breaking their sleep, and often distracting their minds about them; and therefore they may well be called misers; such persons being certainly as miserable creatures as any upon earth: but there are no such in heaven.

2. As you will be there freed from the carking and perplexing cares of this world, so you will be freed too from all the temptations of the devil. He here goes about like a *roaring lion, seeking daily whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. But he is confined only to these lower regions of the world; and being once cast down from heaven, he can never come there again. And therefore, if you be once got thither, you will then condemn his malice, and deride his power, as being infinitely too short to reach so high as you are got; so that as you shall have no corruptions within, so neither will you have any temptations from without you, to sin or vanity.

3. Hence also you will be freed from the gnawings and disturbances of a guilty conscience; which none can tell how great a torture it is, but such as have it: they can acquaint you from their own experi-

ence, that no sorrow is like to theirs; who being made, as Job was, to possess the sins of their youth, their own consciences are armed against them, so that they have an intestine war carried on within their own bowels, and that too with such violence and heat, that it bears down all before it; insomuch that such persons at such a time as this have a kind of hell upon earth, and real misery in the midst of all their seeming jollity. And though you all may not as yet have undergone the anguish of a fretted conscience in its height and fury, yet I believe there is none of you but some time or other have had some intimations of it; and every one is continually obnoxious to its severest torments. But this lasts only while we are upon earth. In heaven there is no such thing as guilt; and therefore there can be no guilty conscience there. No, could you look into the breasts of all the glorified saints which are now in heaven, you would not see so much as a cloud or mist there, much less any storm or tempest. No, there is nothing there but calmness, serenity, and peace.

4. As you will there be at peace within yourselves, so will you be at peace with God too, so as to have his wrath and anger towards you perfectly appeased. He never frowns upon any one that is once admitted into his court. It is true, he *is angry with the wicked every day*, Psal. vii. 11. but there are no wicked persons there, and by consequence none that he will be angry at. And verily, how light soever you may make of this at present, if ever any of you shall come to heaven, you will then find that to have God reconciled to you, and well pleased with you, is indeed the principal jewel in the crown of glory; there being no joy or pleasure, no comfort or happiness in the world, like that of apprehending God's special love and favour towards us. To see the supreme Being of the world well pleased with us, to see him

smiling upon us, to see him demeaning himself as rejoicing over us, and delighting in us ; oh ! who is able to express the joy that must needs transport the hearts of such as behold this blessed sight !

5. As you shall be thus freed from all care, freed from all temptations, from satan, from the torment of a guilty conscience, and the wrath of an incensed God ; so you shall be freed likewise from the fear of ever being troubled with these things, or any thing else more. For the immunities and privileges granted to the new Jerusalem, the city that is above, are for ever, so as never to be revoked, infringed, or violated : and that when you come to heaven, you will not only know, but be perfectly assured of ; which will add a great lustre to them : for otherwise, the very fear of losing them would damp your comfort in the enjoying of them. But being always possessed with a firm belief and sure confidence that you shall never know what sin, or trouble, or fear is more ; though this was all that heaven could afford you, yet it could not but be acknowledged to be a place that deserves to be earnestly desired and sought by all.

But if you consider in the next place, that the blessedness you hope for in the world to come, doth not only consist in freedom from all evil, but likewise in the enjoyment of whatsoever is good, this must needs enhance our esteem and desire of it ; forasmuch as there is nothing that you can desire to make you happy, but in heaven you shall have it in its beauty and perfection : for there you shall have—what shall you have—*more than the eye ever saw, or ear heard, or the heart of man is able to conceive*, 1 Cor. ii. 9. And if no heart be able to conceive it, I am sure no mortal's tongue can be able to express it fully to you. And therefore I could heartily wish, methinks, that an angel would come down for a while, and acquaint you with the glories that are above. But seeing we have no ground to expect

that, I shall endeavour to stammer out my conceptions of them as well as I can.

First, therefore, so soon as ever you arrive at heaven, you will be immediately admitted into the society of the most glorious and perfect creatures that were ever made; angels, archangels, cherubims, seraphims, with all the powers of heaven, as well as glorified saints, receiving you into their friendship and company; so that instead of conversing with poor sinful mortals, as you do upon earth, you will there keep company with pure and perfect, blessed and immortal spirits, whose innocent, pious, and heavenly conversation, cannot but be an exceeding pleasure and delight to you, who then will be like unto them.

2. Neither will you only have the happiness of enjoying the society of the best and purest creatures, but even of Christ himself. For you shall be where he is, and behold the glory which God hath given him, according as himself prayed you might, John xvii. 24. And verily, if you love the Lord Jesus Christ above all things else, as you must do before you can get to heaven, when you come there, it cannot surely but rejoice your hearts to live with him whom your souls love.

3. You shall not only behold Christ clothed with your own nature, but you shall likewise behold God himself unveiling his face, and discovering his glory and perfections to you. For here we see but as through a glass darkly; but there, face to face: now we know but in part; but then we shall know, even as we are known, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. The meaning whereof is, that we shall then know, behold, and contemplate the eternal God himself, the centre of all perfections, as clearly, as fully, as perfectly as our natures either are, or can be made capable of. But here I must confess myself at a nonplus, not able to find out words whereby to express my own thoughts concerning the greatness of that happiness which

we hope to enjoy in beholding God, and in dwelling perpetually upon the contemplation of his divine perfections. Only this I may say in general, that this is certainly the only happiness that we were at first designed and fitted for; all the faculties of our souls being so composed, that this the clear vision of God will fill and satisfy them altogether; so that our whole souls will be every way as full of joy and delight as they are able to contain. For our understandings being thus wholly taken up with the contemplation of God, our wills cannot but be fully bent and inclined to him, and our love and affections so inflamed towards him, that our whole souls shall be transported into nothing else but joy and pleasure, comfort and delight, in the enjoyment of him.

This, this is the great, the exceeding great and transcendent happiness, which the glorified saints and angels do now enjoy above yonder glorious sun. And this is that blessed hope, or the blessedness we hope for, when the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ shall appear in glory. And need I now tell you what I promised to shew in the last place; even that the consideration and expectation of such happiness as this is, should encourage and excite you all to the practice of true grace and virtue, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world? Will it not be superfluous to prove this now? surely it will. For how is it possible to hear so much of heaven, and not desire to come thither? And how is it possible to desire to go to heaven in good earnest, and not to walk in the way that leads thither? Certainly it cannot but be impossible; insomuch that say what you please, plead what you can for yourselves, you can never persuade me that you have any real desire to go to heaven, unless you use the utmost of your power *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* For you cannot but all know

that without this you can never go to heaven; seeing that that very grace whereby alone it is possible for you to be saved, so expressly and plain^{ly} teacheth and obligeth all men to do these things in order to their being saved.

Let me therefore ask you seriously in the presence of Almighty God, do you desire in good earnest to partake of the happiness we have now been speaking of, even to be all glorified saints in heaven, or do you not? If you do not, to what purpose do you come to church to learn how to get to heaven, when in the mean time you care not whether ever you come there or no? But if you seriously desire to go thither, what mean you to continue still in the broad path that leads directly from it? Why is it that you do not follow your Saviour's counsel, even to deny yourselves, take up your crosses, and follow Christ, through all the duties and precepts which he hath been pleased to enjoin you? What do you think to go to heaven any other way than that which Christ hath chalked out for you? Or do you expect to be saved any other way but by him? But what, hath not he told you as plain as he could speak, *that except ye repent, you must all perish?* Luke xiii. 3. Hath not he told you with his own mouth, *that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven?* Matt. v. 20. Hath not he told you by his apostle, *that without holiness no man shall see the Lord?* Heb. xiv. 12. And is it not there expressly said likewise, *that the same grace of God that bringeth salvation to mankind, teacheth us likewise to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?* With what confidence then can any of you expect to be saved hereafter, without being holy here? What do you think to disannul the counsels, and revoke the decrees of heaven? To make Christ him-

self a liar, and his words of none effect? No, mistake not yourselves; whatsoever becomes of you, be sure his word shall stand, and be made good: and by consequence in plain terms, you will all be damned and ruined to eternity, unless you repent and believe the Gospel, so as to practise what *the grace of God* here teacheth: there is no help for it; for as men or angels cannot, so Christ will never save you upon any other terms; he hath told you so beforehand, and therefore you may believe him.

I speak not this to frighten or discourage any of you; but so long as I am amongst you, you must give me leave to deal plainly with you. It is my hearty desire that every soul here present may be saved, and partake of those celestial joys which you have now been hearing of. But that I am confident you can never do, unless you perform real, sincere, and universal obedience to all the commands of God to the utmost of your power and knowledge. I should be a false prophet and deceiver should I tell you otherwise. And therefore, if you have any desire to go to heaven, if you have any love for your own precious and immortal souls, be advised at length to dally no longer with eternity, nor make a mock of sin, or sport of holiness; but devote yourselves in good earnest to the practice of whatsoever is required of you. You know, every man, the sins you have hitherto been addicted to; avoid them for the future as deadly poison and venom. You know the duties that are incumbent upon you; perform them all as for your lives, trusting in the merits of Christ for God's acceptance of them: for assure yourselves, your eternal welfare depends upon these things. For *the grace of God, &c.*

SERMON XCIII.

HOLINESS THE GREAT DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION.

TITUS ii. 14.

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

THESE words are part of the argument which the apostle here brings, why we should live *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*, and it adds a great deal of force and strength to it: for having minded us of the *blessed hope which we look for at the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*, that so he might excite and encourage us the more to the practice of what the grace of God here teacheth; he adds moreover for our better encouragement, what this great God, who then will appear in glory, hath done for us, in order to our attainment of the blessedness we hope for, when he shall thus appear *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us, &c.*

Which words containing the whole mystery of our salvation by Jesus Christ, we who hope to be saved by him, cannot but look upon ourselves as highly concerned to understand the full meaning and intent of them: which that I may explain unto you as clearly as possibly I can, without taking them in pieces, I shall give you the true sense and purport

of the words as they lie in order ; for indeed every word in the text is very emphatical and significant, and by consequence much to be observed by all that set themselves in good earnest to look after heaven and eternal glory

As for the first word, *who*, it needs not much explaining ; for you cannot but all understand whom he means, or which is the antecedent to this relative, even *the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. Only it is to be observed, that for the right apprehending the mystery of our redemption by him, it is necessary that we understand those words conjunctly, not conceiving of Christ as only God, or only man, but as God-man ; or, as it is here more fully expressed, as *the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ* ; as one who being begotten of the Father from eternity, was therefore *the great God* ; and being born of his mother in time, thereby became man ; and being thus both God and man, is likewise our Saviour.

2. *Who gave himself* ; that is, who being *the great God*, gave himself to be made man, Phil. ii, 6, 7. and being God and man, he gave himself to be betrayed, apprehended, accused, condemned, crucified, not only in appearance, but really and truly, ἀληθῶς ἀπέθανε, οὐ δοκῆσει οὐ φαντασίᾳ, *Ignat.* And he gave himself voluntarily, freely, of his own accord, without any force, violence, or compulsion from any other. Judas indeed betrayed him to the Jews, but his betraying him had been in vain, unless Christ had given himself, John xviii. 4, 5. Pilate delivered him to the soldiers, but he could not have had that power over him, unless himself had given it him from above, John xix. 11. He was derided, scoffed at, accused, and condemned as a malefactor ; yet so that none could have spoken one word against him, had not himself given them breath to do it. He was crucified by the Jews, not because he could not help it, but because he would not. And when he was upon

the cross, he died indeed, not because he could not save his own, but because he had a mind to save our lives: for they could not force his soul from his body, but he voluntarily gave up the ghost, and that too immediately after he had cried with a loud voice, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*, Luke xxiii. 46. And seeing he had so much strength still as to cry aloud, he could not have been so near death, but that himself was pleased to die, and that before the two malefactors that were crucified with him, whose legs were forced to be broken that they might die. When he was already dead, or had yielded up the ghost; or, as it is in the Greek, ἀφῆκε τὸ Πνεῦμα, *emisit Spiritum*, he sent his Spirit from him; so that *emisit Spiritum non amisit*. Ambros. *Spiritum cum verbo sponte dimisit*. Tertul. *Non enim deseruit invitus, sed quia voluit, quum voluit, et quomodo voluit*. Aug. All was still done with his own will, as himself also assures us, John x. 17, 18. And hence it is that he is here said to have given himself. Who gave

3. *Himself*. Himself, not gold, not silver, not lambs, not calves, nor men, but himself, 1 Pet. i. 28. Sometimes he is said to have given his flesh, John vi. 51 sometimes his body, Luke xxii. 19. sometimes his blood, ver. 20. But here he is said to have given himself, his whole self, not only his soul or his body, but himself, soul and body, and all he had or was; himself, God-man, which was certainly the greatest gift that was ever given, the highest price that was ever paid for any thing in the world.

But what or whom did he give himself for? For us: *who gave himself for us*; not for himself, not for angels, but for us men; for us corrupt, sinful, and rebellious mortals upon earth; who by nature are enemies to God, and to every thing that is good. It was for us that he gave himself, not only dying for our sakes, but in our steads; for which we must know that he is sometimes said to *give himself for*

our sins, Gal. i. 4. that is, to make satisfaction to divine justice for them. But here he is said to have given himself for us; that is, he gave himself to suffer death in our steads, 1 Pet. iv. 1. Rom. v. 8.

And that you may know wherefore Christ thus suffered for us; it follows, *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us*. For the opening of which, consider,

1. *God made man upright*, Eccl. vii. 29.

2. But upon commission of the first sin all mankind became obnoxious to death, which was before threatened against it, Gen. ii. 17. And it not standing with the justice and honour of God not to make good his word, and do as he hath said, hence the whole race of Adam are subject to death, even eternal as well as temporal, Rom. v. 17, 18.

3. Hence Christ having undertaken to save or redeem us from that death which we are all obliged to suffer, it was necessary that he should undergo it for us; which he accordingly did: and his death being accepted of by God instead of ours, hence he is here said to have given himself for us, because he delivered up himself to suffer that death which was due to us. Hence also he is said properly to have redeemed us, because *he gave his life a ransom for us*, Matt. xx. 28. A ransom, that is, as the Greek word *λύτρον* signifies, a price of redemption. And so it is elsewhere said, *that he gave himself a ransom for all*, 1 Tim. ii. 6. *ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων*, a price of redemption for all; and so it is the same in effect with this in my text, *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us*: for laying down his own life instead of ours, hereby he hath redeemed us from that obligation to death which we before lay under, he having undergone that death for us, which in the first Adam was threatened against us; so that God's justice being fully satisfied, we may escape that death which before we

were subject to. Thus therefore it is that Christ hath redeemed us

From all iniquity. Which is the next expression to be considered, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity*, that is, from the guilt of sin, and from those obligations to death and punishment which our iniquities had brought upon us : so that now our iniquities shall not be imputed to us, nor we obliged to suffer for them, for none of them : *for he hath redeemed us from all iniquity*, both original and actual ; from that contracted by our first parents, and from those which ourselves have committed in our persons ; whether they be sins of omission or sins of commission ; sins of ignorance or sins of wilfulness ; open or secret sins ; sins of a lighter tincture, or sins of a deeper dye. *For he gave himself, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.*

Oh blessed Jesu ! when shall we be able to praise and magnify thy name, and to render thee thanks sufficient for this thy unspeakable love and compassion to fallen man ! That ever thou shouldest regard and pity such worthless and sinful worms as we are, so far as to lay down thine own life to ransom ours ! Who are we, or what was our father's house, that thou who inhabitest eternity, God co-equal with the Father in glory, power, and majesty, infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thine own perfections ; that thou shouldest vouchsafe to condescend so far as to take our frail nature into thine own all-glorious and divine Person, and in it to suffer for those very sins which we ungrateful wretches have committed against thyself ; that thou shouldest come down from heaven to earth only to raise us up from earth to heaven ; that thou, the Son of God, shouldest become the Son of man, that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God ; that thou shouldest be derided, that we might be honoured ; thou condemned, that we might be absolved ; and die, that we might live ! Oh ! what

tongue is able to express, what heart to conceive, how infinitely we are all obliged to love and serve thee, to praise and honour thee, to bless and magnify thy name unto all eternity; who gavest thyself for us, that thou mightest redeem us from all iniquity; and not only so, but purify to thyself a peculiar people! Indeed this is that which perfecteth our redemption, and maketh it both full and effectual, and therefore it deserveth to be seriously weighed and considered by us: for we must not think that our Saviour came into the world only to expiate our sins, and to take off our obligations to punishment for them; but he came likewise to cleanse us from our sins, and to make us holy: or, as it is here expressed, *he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and also purify to himself a peculiar people.* Where we may observe,

1. That one great end why *Christ gave himself for us*, was, *that he might purify us*; that is, make us pure and holy, good and pious creatures. For the opening of which we must know.

1. We by nature are all defiled with sin as well as guilty of it, our hearts being naturally averse from whatsoever is good, and inclined to evil; and all the faculties of our souls so out of tune, that we can do nothing as we ought to do it. ✓

2. So long as we are in this condition we are altogether incapable of enjoying God, and, by consequence, of being happy; for our happiness consisteth only in the vision and fruition of the chiefest good: in order unto which, it is indispensably necessary that our minds be bent, and our wills and affections inclined, towards him, otherwise it is impossible for us to take any pleasure or delight in the beholding and enjoying of him; or rather, it is impossible for us to behold and enjoy him at all. But so long as we remain in the same condition wherein we came into the world, without repenting or being converted

to him, it is plain that we have no propensity at all, or inclination towards him ; but have rather a strange kind of averseness from him, if not an absolute antipathy against him ; as one not only unlike but directly contrary to our impure and sinful temper and disposition. And therefore, until our minds be changed, and our inclinations taken off from sin and turned unto God ; that is, in Scripture-language, until we have repented, and so be made truly holy and like to God, we are no more capable of enjoying any complacency and satisfaction in the contemplation of the divine perfections, nor indeed of contemplating aright upon them, than a blind man is capable of distinguishing colours, or a deaf man of being ravished with sounds ; no more than a brute beast is capable of surfeiting himself upon the pleasures of a mathematical demonstration. This is all our conditions by nature ; thus it is, and thus it will be with us, until our minds be altered, and our souls converted from sin to God ; till then, as we shall not enjoy heaven though we could, so we cannot though we might, not being at all qualified for the participation of such pure and spiritual joys as those are.

3. Hence our blessed Saviour having undertaken to save and bring us to heaven, it was necessary that he should likewise fit and qualify us for the enjoyment of the happiness which is to be there had ; which he therefore accordingly undertook to do, by cleansing us from our sins, and purifying us to himself. And that this was one great and principal end of his taking our flesh upon him, and dying or giving himself for us, is not only expressly asserted here in my text, but it is plain likewise from the whole tenour of the Gospel, which teacheth us all along, that as he came to reconcile God to us, by dying for our sins, so he came to reconcile us to God, by cleansing us from our sins, and making us truly holy. For *his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness,*

1 Pet. ii. 24. And he was sent to bless us, in turning away every one of us from his iniquities, Acts iii. 26. So that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin, 1 John i. 7. Yea, he was therefore called Jesus, that is, a Saviour, because he came to save his people from their sins, Matt. i. 21. that is, from the filth and power, as well as from the guilt and punishment of sin. And he therefore gave himself for us, that he might sanctify us throughout, and make us holy and without blemish, Eph. v. 25, 26, 27.

4. Christ thus giving himself for us, not only to redeem us from all iniquity, but also that he might purify us to himself; hence by his death and passions he did not only satisfy God's justice for our sins, but likewise merited the power of bestowing the Spirit upon us, and so of infusing true grace and virtue into us, whereby we may be enabled to forsake our former sins, and for the future to perform sincere and evangelical obedience to all the moral law; so that as our persons are justified only by his merit imputed, so are our natures sanctified by his Spirit imparted to us; whereby,

1. He enlightens our minds and rectifies our judgments concerning all things that have any reference to our future state; cheering up our apprehensions concerning God, and possessing our hearts with a due sense of his greatness, power, and glory, and with a thorough belief that he is the chiefest good, and that happiness can be had in none but him; convincing us also of the sinfulness of sin and the beauty of holiness, of the vanity of all things here below, and of the glory that is above. And it is a true saying of St. Austin, *Non minus necessarium esse menti illuminationem, quam oculis lumen.*

2. He purifies or amends the will, inclining it to follow the dictates of the practical understanding, so as to choose what it represents as truly good, and to refuse what it dictates to be evil. This is the great blessing which God hath promised under the notion

of a new heart, and a new spirit, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. whereby such as are in Christ are made new creatures, 2 Cor. v. 17. for all their affections are by this means turned into another channel, and are fixed upon new objects.

3. Hence our actions always following the temper and inclination of our minds, they also become pure and holy, or at least such as God for Christ's sake will accept of.

Thus it is that Christ purifieth us to himself; and thus you and I may be purified by him, and shall too, if we do but sincerely endeavour to do what we can ourselves, and trust in him for his assistance to enable us to do what otherwise we cannot: so that now, if we be not all pure and holy, if we be not all as real and true saints as ever lived, it is our own fault; for Christ is always present and ready to assist us, if we do but apply ourselves unto him for it; and himself hath told us, that *such as come to him he will in no wise reject*, John vi. 37. Oh! what cause then have we all to praise and to give thanks unto him, and to say as it is, Rev. i. 5, 6.

But it is to be further considered, that as Christ came to purify us, so he purifieth us to himself; for *he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people*: so that one great reason why he purifies us is, that we should for the future be his; not sin's, not Satan's, not the world's, not our own, but wholly his, his real disciples, his faithful servants, his peculiar and obedient people. For the better understanding of which we must consider,

1. Man was created in a free estate, subject to none but God, under whom he was constituted lord and master of all terrestrial creatures, every thing upon earth being subject to his power, as his body was to his soul, his senses to his will, his will to his reason, and his reason unto God.

2. By sinning against his Maker, he thereby forfeited all his power, and became a mere slave and vassal to all things which before were subject to him ; so that now we are all born slaves, slaves to sin, slaves to the world, slaves to Satan, slaves to our own lusts and corruptions, Rom. vi. 17 2 Pet. ii. 19. 2 Tim. ii. 26. And the reason is, because we are *sold under sin*, Rom. vii. 14. and that not only by our first parents, but too apparently by ourselves ; for naturally we are like Ahab, *who sold himself to work evil in the sight of the Lord*, 1 Kings xxi. 20.

And hence it comes to pass that sin exercises so much power and tyranny over us, that we are never our own men, being always at the beck and command of sin ; as you may all find by too sad and daily experience, one sin drawing you this way, and another sin dragging you that way, as itself pleaseth.

3. Christ came to redeem us from this thralldom, and assert us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, by subduing our sins under us, and so purifying us to himself, that we should no longer be at sin's, but at his service and command, so as not to regard the dictates of our own carnal reason, nor yet the precepts of our own headstrong corruptions ; but devoting ourselves wholly to observe those laws and commands which he hath laid upon us. For this was one great end why he redeemed us, and it is the only recompence that we can give him for it. And moreover, there is all the reason in the world that we should give ourselves to him who gave himself for us, and laid down so great a price as his own blood for our redemption to himself : to himself I say ; for it is in the nature of all purchases and redemptions, that they that purchase or redeem a thing, have it for the future to themselves. How much more in this, the greatest purchase that ever was made, the Son of God himself having redeemed

us with the price of his own blood. Surely we cannot but be infinitely obliged to live to him that died for us, so as to employ all the faculties of our souls and members of our bodies in his service, and for his glory. As the apostle argues, 1 Cor. vi. 20.

Neither is it sufficient that we be Christ's people only in general; but we must be too his peculiar people. For so saith the apostle, *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people*; λαὸν περιούσιον, *a dear, a precious, an excellent people above all other*. In the Old Testament it answers the Hebrew word סגלה : which the LXX render by λαὸς περιούσιος, and we by a *peculiar people*, Deut. xiv. 2. sometimes *a special people*, Deut. vii. 6. sometimes *a peculiar treasure*, Exod. xix. 5. Psal. cxxxv. 4, sometimes *his jewels*, Mal. iii. 17 The Targum always interprets it by חביב *beloved*, or *a people beloved*. Symmachus renders it ἐξάίρετος, *a special, a singular, an excellent people*.

And verily such as Christ effectually purifies to himself, are indeed a peculiar people from all other people in the world.

1. They are a people of a peculiar temper and disposition from all other people. As Caleb is said to have been a man of another spirit from the rest of the children of Israel, Numb. xiv. 24. so are all such as Christ purifies; they are quite of another spirit from the men of this world, they have other thoughts, other affections, other desires, other hopes, other fears, other designs in the world than other men use to have; so that although they live and converse in the world without being conceited of themselves, or censuring others, yet they are a singular and peculiar people of themselves, as different from all other people as light is from darkness, as heaven is from earth, as holiness is from sin. For while all the rest of the world lies in wickedness, these do not only

seem to be holy, and make a shew of piety; but they really and truly are a holy people, a people set apart and consecrated wholly unto God. And therefore a holy and peculiar people still go together. Deut. vii. 6. xiv. 2. And for this it is that God avoucheth them to be his peculiar people, that so they may *keep all his commandments*, Deut. xxvi. 18. This is that which makes them so beloved of God, that he reckons them his treasure, his jewels, his special and peculiar people; because they have his image enstamped upon them, and so are like to him, holy as he is holy; Christ himself having purified them to himself, and so made them his pure, and by consequence his peculiar people.

2. Such may justly be called a peculiar people also, because they have peculiar names and titles given to them in the holy Scriptures. God having a peculiar propriety in them, he is therefore pleased to call them by peculiar names, whereby they may be distinguished from the rest of mankind. For they are called in Scripture kings and priests, and asserted to be made so by Christ, who purifies them to himself *a peculiar people*, Rev. i. 6. Neither are they called only kings and priests; but in the very abstract, *a kingly or royal priesthood*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. So that as they are made new creatures, so they are called by new names, Isa. lx. 2, 3, 4.

3. They are honoured likewise with peculiar relations. For they who before might say to *corruption*, *Thou art our Father; and to the worm, Thou art our mother and our sister*, Job xvii. 14. may now say to the eternal God, *Thou art our Father; to the church, Thou art our mother; and to Christ himself, Thou art our brother*. For God himself vouchsafeth to call himself their Father, Luke xii. 32. yea, and their Husband too, Isai. liv. 5. Hos. ii. 16. The church is their mother, Gal. iv. 26. Eph. v. 32. And Christ calls them his brethren, John xx. 17. Rom. viii. 29.

4. They are invested with peculiar privileges, such as all other persons have no right or title to at all. For they have free admittance into God's presence, and his ear is always open to their prayer, Matt. xxi. 22. Yea, and whatsoever God himself doth that hath any relation to them, it shall some way or other conduce to their good and comfort, Rom. viii. 28. Πάντα συνεργεῖ, all things work together; all things that God doth by his ordinary providence, and if our necessity require, all things which he can do by his extraordinary power.

5. They are endowed with peculiar interests: though they may have little or nothing of this world's goods, yet they are worth more than all the world besides. As our Saviour said, his *kingdom was not of this world*; so neither doth their estate lie here, but it lies in Christ's kingdom, that is, in the other world. They are interested in all his merits, and whatsoever he hath purchased by his death and sufferings; interested in all the promises of the Gospel sealed unto them in the blood of Christ; interested in all the properties of God; his wisdom, power, and goodness being all engaged for them: interested in the prayers of all the saints upon earth: and interested in all the influences of the Holy Spirit to guide and direct them in all their ways.

6. They are instated in a peculiar inheritance, being heirs of God, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, and so they are entitled to, and instated in, a *kingdom*, James ii. 5. in the *city of God*, Heb. xii. 22. and *eternal life*, Tit. iii. 7. So that they shall be picked out of the rest of all mankind at the end of the world, to live with God, to behold his glory, admire his perfections, and enjoy his presence for ever.

This honour have all the saints, who may well be termed a peculiar people, seeing they have a peculiar temper, names, relations, privileges, interests,

and inheritance, all different from other people, and peculiar to themselves; whom Christ is therefore here asserted *to have purified to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* *Zealous of good works*; that is the greatest reason why they are Christ's peculiar people, because they serve him in a peculiar manner, being *zealous of good works*; not zealous for needless opinions; not zealous for idolatry and superstition; not zealous for parties and factions in the church; but zealous of good works. They are the proper objects of our zeal, as having an immediate respect to the glory of God, the ultimate end of all our actions, Gal. iv. 18. And whatsoever zeal we have, unless it be for good works, it is both useless and dangerous. Be sure it is not the zeal of Christ's peculiar people; for those he purifies to himself to be zealous of good works, to prosecute and practise them with all the life and vigour, with all the zeal and fervency that they can. But here we shall consider briefly two things:

1st, What we are here to understand by good works. For which we must know that there are three things required to the making up of good works. It is necessary that the matter we do be good; that the end for which we do it be good; and that the manner of our doing it be good too. The matter must be such as God hath commanded, or at least allows of. For if it be any way contrary to the revealed will of God, whatsoever pretences men may make, be sure it cannot be good. And be the matter of an action ever so good, yet it is no good work, unless the end be so too. For though a good end cannot make a bad action good; yet a bad end will always make a good action bad. And therefore, whatsoever we do, we must be sure to avoid all bad and sinister ends and aims in the doing of it, as carnal interest, popular applause, vain glory, and the like; but our eye must be fixed principally upon *the*

glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31. Neither must we only regard the matter and end of our actions; but we must have a care how we perform them too, even with humility, faith, and obedience unto God. For no man can do a good work, that doth not therefore do it because it is good, and so obey God in the doing of it. Where all these things concur, the work is good; where any one of them is wanting, the whole is bad and sinful.

2dly, What is it to be zealous of good works? It implies,

1. That their minds are bent and inclined to the doing of good works, so as to be willing and ready upon all occasions to *do good*, 1 Tim. vi. 18. That they be desirous of, and take pleasure in the doing of them; that they rejoice to *do good*, Eccles. iii. 12. and *delight greatly in God's commands*, Psal. cxii. 1 cxix. 143.

2. That they study, contrive, and endeavour all ways imaginable to do all the good they can in their generation, so as to be always employed with zeal and earnestness in doing not only some, but all sorts of good works whatsoever; whether works of piety towards God, works of charity to the poor, or works of justice and equity towards all; pressing with undaunted courage and resolution through all difficulties whatsoever, to obey God and keep his commandments, so as never to be discouraged from doing good by any danger which we may seem to incur by it. Thus the apostles manifested themselves to be Christ's peculiar people, zealous of good works, by their care and diligence, by their zeal and constancy in propagating the Gospel, maugre all the opposition that was made against them; nothing being able to deter them from it. And this we may lay down as a most certain truth, that as no man can get any good by doing ill, so neither can any man get harm by doing good.

3. They that would be zealous of good works, do not only do good works themselves, but stir up others likewise to the doing of them. For he that is truly zealous himself, cannot but endeavour to make others as zealous as himself is; and therefore to manifest ourselves to be zealous of good works, we must follow the apostle's counsel, Heb. x. 24.

Thus I have endeavoured to explain unto you the great ends of our Saviour's coming into the world, *who gave himself for us, &c.* Now from what you have heard, none of you but may observe, that as Christ came to save you from hell, and to bring you unto heaven; so in order thereunto, he came to save you from your sins, and to make you holy. And therefore he expects that all you who hope to be saved by him, should be *a peculiar people, zealous of good works*. He expects that you be eminent for piety and religion towards God, as also for charity and righteousness towards men; that you shine as lights in the world, Matt. v. 16. He expects that you do not content yourselves with the bare profession of his religion, nor yet with reading the Scriptures, hearing of sermons, and praying now and then; but that you strive and study to excel the heathenish moralists, the Jewish and Christian Pharisees, yea and your former selves too, in all true grace and virtue, in humility, in meekness, in temperance, in patience, in self-denial, in contempt of the world, in justice, in charity, in heavenly-mindedness, in faith, in praying, in fasting, *in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and in living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6. What now remains but that knowing your Master's will, you should all do it? You see Christ came into the world to make you his *peculiar people, zealous of good works*: and such you must be before ever you come to heaven. Let me therefore solicit and beseech you in Christ's stead, abandon and for-

sake all your former practices which you know to be contrary to his pleasure and command; and for the future live like Christians indeed, like Christ's own proper and peculiar people: devote every thing you have, every thing you are, every thing you can do, wholly to his service and honour; make now religion both your business and recreation; esteem it, as it is, your highest honour to honour him, and your chiefest pleasure to please him. Do not only do good works, but be zealous in the doing of them; never thinking that you can do enough for him that hath done and suffered so much as Christ hath done for you: still trusting on the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, both for the pardon of your defects, and for the acceptance both of your persons and performances before God. Do this, and your souls shall live: leave this undone, and yourselves will be undone for ever. And think not to say within yourselves, that this is more than you can do; and that you being conscious of your own infirmities, fear that you can never attain to so high a pitch of grace and virtue as Christ requireth of you. For whosoever thou art that thinkest so with thyself, I dare assure thee in the name of Christ, that if thou dost but endeavour after it as well as thou canst, he himself will enable thee to attain fully unto it. Though thou beest weak, he is strong; and if thou dost but apply thyself aright to him, he will purify thee to himself one of his *peculiar people, zealous of good works*. This was the great end of his coming into the world; and therefore you need not fear either his willingness, or his power to do it. Why therefore dost thou complain of the power of sin, and labour under the burden of it? Go to Christ, and he *will give thee rest*, Matt. xi. 28. Do you therefore but sincerely endeavour to do what possibly you can yourselves, and trust in him for

his assistance of his grace and Spirit, as well as for pardon and forgiveness; and then you cannot miss of either. By this means every soul here present may be so purified, as to be admitted into the number of God's *peculiar people, zealous of good works*; and by consequence be admitted ere long to heaven, there to praise him *who gave himself, &c.*

SERMON XCIV.

CHRIST'S LIFE A PATTERN OF HOLINESS TO CHRISTIANS.

1 PET. i. 15.

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

NOTHING being more certain than that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, nothing surely can be more necessary than to know what this holiness is, and how to attain unto it: a question which all mankind, of whatsoever estate or condition they be, are equally concerned to understand, in order to their being happy. For as it is impossible for any one to be happy that is not first holy; so it is impossible likewise for any one to be holy that doth not first know what it is to be so. Neither is this so easy a matter to know as it is generally thought to be; as is plain from the various opinions there are in the world concerning it. For if we consult the lives and actions of men, especially of those that make the greatest pretences to holiness, we may easily observe how strangely they differ in their notions about holiness. For some place holiness only in external rites and ceremonies, in saying a great many *Ave-Maria's* and *Pater-Noster's*, in living a monastical life, on going on pilgrimage to some monument or relic of a canonized saint, in bowing to images, in hearing mass, whether they understand

it or no, and especially in falling down before a consecrated wafer, when it is carried triumphantly in procession. Others are of a quite contrary opinion, placing their holiness in opposing all manner of rites and ceremonies, in expressing no reverence at all in the service and worship of Almighty God, in long *extempore* prayers, in frequent hearing of sermons, and receiving the sacrament without kneeling, and in separating themselves from other people as to religious matters. Nay, there have been, and I fear still are, too many that abuse the sacred name of holiness to palliate their most atrocious crimes, and barbarous impieties: some running into schism and sedition, others practising treason and rebellion, and all under the pretence of holiness. But holiness is questionless a thing of another nature than such deluded mortals would make it. For be sure it is the greatest excellency that it is possible for creatures to be endued with; and therefore to mistake in that, is certainly the most dangerous and pernicious error that any of us can fall into, especially considering that it is absolutely impossible for any of us either to attain to happiness, or to avoid everlasting destruction, unless we be really and truly holy, in that sense as we are required to be in the holy Scriptures.

Fearing therefore that many of you may be mistaken in a matter of such consequence as this is, so as to think yourselves holy when you are not, and heartily desiring that you should all be so truly holy here as to be perfectly happy hereafter, I have chosen these words, from whence to explain unto you the true nature of holiness; of that holiness *without which you can never see God*, nor be happy neither in this world, nor yet in that which is to come. And to understand this, I know no text in all the Scriptures more proper and apposite than the words I have now read. *But as he which hath called you is holy, &c.*

From whence we might first observe, that some-

thing of the nature of holiness may be gathered from what it is here opposed to, even to the lusts which men in their ignorant and unregenerate state are addicted to, ver. 14. Whence it is plain, that holiness is contrary to all manner of base, carnal, and earthly lusts or desires, ταῖς πρότερον ἐπιθυμίαις, such lusts as sinful and worldly-minded men are fashioned and conformed to, before they come to the knowledge of the truth: which the apostle comprehends under three heads; *the lusts of the flesh*; *the lusts of the eye*; and, *the pride of life*, 1 John ii. 16. Where *the lusts of the flesh* denote the desire of carnal pleasures; *the lusts of the eye*, the desire of worldly riches; *the pride of life*, the desire of popular applause and vain-glory: which kind of desires argue a strange degeneracy and impurity in the soul, and therefore holiness here is directly opposed to them, as taking off our desires and inclinations from such low, unworthy, and impure objects, and raising them up to objects suitable and proper for them. From whence we may conclude, that so long as a man indulgeth such vain and sinful desires as these are, he is no holy man. So long as your minds are set upon either the pleasures, the profits, or the honours of this present life, whatsoever pretences you make to holiness, you are not holy in that sense wherein you are here commanded to be so, as is plain from the antithesis or opposition which the apostle here makes betwixt such desires and being holy. *But, &c.*

But I shall not insist any longer upon that now; because my principal design is to search out, and, by the blessing of God, to explain unto you the true nature of holiness in itself from these words: wherein I desire you to observe three things:

I. The pattern of holiness: *as he who hath called you is holy.*

II. The command that is here laid upon us: *so be ye holy.*

III. The extent and latitude of this holiness : *in all manner of conversation.*

The first thing to be considered is that which is here first placed, even the pattern of holiness, even God himself, whose holiness is here asserted to be the pattern and example of ours. And therefore, we can never understand what it is for ourselves to be holy, unless we first know in what sense God is said to be holy : for our holiness is said to be in its capacity conformable and like to his : for as he is holy, so are we bound to be holy too ; for nothing can be more plain, than that by him who is here said to have called us, we are to understand God : for it is he, and he alone, who hath called us from darkness to light, from error to truth, from sin to holiness, and from idolatry to the true religion. And yet you see it is here expressly said, *as he*, that is, *as God, who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy.*

But now for the holiness of God, we must first know, that holiness is such an essential attribute or property in God, that he is not only often said to be holy, but he is frequently termed in a peculiar manner, *the holy One of Israel*, Psal. lxxxix. 18. Isa. xvi. 7 xxx. 12. and simply or absolutely, *the holy One*, Isa. xl. 25. Hab. i. 12. Hence as he is sometimes said to swear by himself, so elsewhere he is said to have *sworn by his holiness*, Psal. lxxxix. 35. Amos iv. 2. From whence it appears that holiness is that perfection whereby God delighteth to express his essence, and to distinguish himself from all other beings. And therefore, although the idols of the heathens are often in Scripture termed gods, yet they are never as I remember called holy ones, as the Lord is, for indeed they were not holy : *for there is none holy as the Lord*, 1 Sam. ii. 2.

These things being considered, it is easy to observe in the next place, that holiness, as attributed unto God, denotes his peerless or supereminent ex-

cellency above all things else, his infinite and supreme majesty and glory, in comparison whereof there is no such thing as glory or greatness in the world: so that to say that God is holy, or the holy One, is as much as to say, that he is a Majesty of incomparable goodness, of incomparable wisdom, of incomparable power, of incomparable glory, infinitely beyond whatsoever else can be called good, or wise, or powerful, or glorious. Hence when the choir of heaven would express the unparalleled excellency of his nature, and so give him the glory due unto his name, they sing out that *Trisagium* so often used by the primitive church, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory*, Isa. vi. 3. Rev. iv. 8. This is the sum and substance of all that the glorified saints and angels do in heaven, even to agnize and celebrate the holiness of God; or to do that which we continually pray may be done, when we say, *Hallowed*, or sanctified, *be thy name*; that is, let all the world acknowledge thee to be the holy One, the supreme and supereminent Being in the world, far exalted above all things else, and therefore to be admitted, adored, and worshiped by whatsoever is in heaven above or in the earth beneath, according to the song of the seven angels, Rev. xv. 3, 4. This therefore is our God, whom we and all the world are bound to worship; and this is his holiness, essential and peculiar to him alone, and incommunicable to any creature.

Having thus discovered what we are to understand by the holiness of God, we are now in the second place to consider in what sense we are here commanded to be holy as he is holy. For which end there are two things to be searched into. 1. What is the true nature of holiness in general, as attributed in Scripture unto creatures, and as we are here enjoined to be holy. 2. In what sense we are commanded to be holy as God is holy.

First, I say, we must consider what is the true nature and property of holiness or sanctity in creatures, according to its notion in the sacred Scriptures. For which we must know first in general, that as holiness when attributed to God denotes his most excellent majesty and supereminency above all things, so likewise when it is attributed to creatures, it denotes their exaltation and pre-eminence above other things, and their separation to something more excellent and divine ; so that, as R. D. Kimchi, a learned Rabbi, rightly observes, in the Scripture all words of sanctity or holiness import a thing separated from other things, by way of excellency or pre-eminence, as is plain from Deut. xix. 2, 7 compared with Josh. xx. 7 וְיִקְדְּשׁוּ *And they sanctified.* The same appears from Exod. xxx. 31, 32, 33, and 35, &c. From whence it is plain, that this oil and this perfume was a peculiar oil and perfume, set apart and distinguished from others, both as to its use and composition ; and upon that account it is here called an holy oil, and an holy perfume, though not in its own nature, yet by the reason of its distinction and separation from other things of the same nature, to higher and more excellent uses. The same notion of holiness may be still further illustrated from the several descriptions that God himself maketh of an holy people, by which we may clearly understand in what sense we are here commanded to be holy. This you may see, Levit. xx. 24, 25, 26. Deut. xiv. 2. xxvi. 18, 19. From whence it is easy to observe, that to be an holy people, in the idiom of the Scriptures, is to be a singular and peculiar people ; a people distinguished from others by way of excellency ; a people advanced above the common estate and condition of others. From which premises duly considered, we may gather both what it is not and what it is to be holy, so as we are here commanded to be. First, what it is not to be holy ; for,

1. It is plain that holiness doth not consist only in external rites, duties, or performances, nor in antic habits or long prayers ; not in talking demurely, or running into corners to hear sermons ; for these things a man may do, and yet be unholy and sinful still. Nor yet doth holiness consist either in the using or abstaining from ceremonies and things indifferent in the worship of God : for a man may use them, and a man may abstain from them ; a man may be for them, and a man may be against them, and yet be unholy and sinful still. Much less doth holiness consist in opposing government, in raising rebellion, or in sowing sedition either in church or state ; for he that doth these things, whatsoever he pretends, is an unholy and sinful man. Nay, to go further still, a man may be very zealous for the religion he is of, and spend and be spent in the defence of it ; he may dispute, and write, yea, and fight too for it, and yet be as far from holiness as if he was of no religion at all : for although holiness may and ought to express itself in our actions, yet it is not seated in them. And therefore, although he that is holy cannot but do all manner of good works, yet a man may do a great many good works, and yet not be an holy man ; for holiness doth not only advance some of a man's actions, but his whole self too above the common estate of mankind.

2. It is plain also that holiness, as it doth not consist in the performance of external duties only, so neither doth it consist in the exercise only of some particular internal graces and virtues, how specious and plausible soever they may appear in the eyes of men : for as holiness is not any particular act, or grace itself, but the truth, and grace, as I may so speak, of all graces ; so neither can any particular acts or graces whatsoever denominate a man to be truly holy ; for verily a man may go a great way, and yet not be an holy man ; *ex. gr.* Thou mayest come to church and hear sermons with a great deal

of seeming reverence and attention, and yet not be an holy man, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. Thou mayest pray with a great deal of earnestness and devotion, and yet be no holy man, Isa. i. 15. Thou mayest *prophesy in Christ's name, and in his name cast out devils*, and yet not be an holy man, Matt. vii. 22. Thou mayest *give all thy goods to feed the poor, and thy body to be burned for thy religion*, and yet not be an holy man, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Thou mayest be very nice and scrupulous in matters of religion and holiness, and yet not be a truly religious and holy man, Matt. xxiii. 25, &c. What shall I say more? Thou mayest have some kind of fear and dread of God, some kind of love and affection for him, some faint wishes and desires to serve him, some kind of pleasure and delight in the performance of holy duties, some sorrow for thy sins, and resolutions against them, some esteem for holiness and value for it, and yet not be truly an holy man. If holiness consisted only in the performance of some duties, or in the exercise only of some virtues, we should have a great many more saints upon earth than I fear there are. Neither would it be so hard a matter to be holy, as be sure it is. But holiness certainly is a larger and more comprehensive thing, than to be confined within the narrow compass of any particular acts, or virtues whatsoever: for to be holy, as I have shewn in general, implies a man to be advanced above the ordinary rank of men, set apart and dedicated wholly to more excellent acts and uses than other men; so that the true nature of holiness consisteth especially in two things.

1. In being taken off or separated from whatsoever debaseth or pollutes the soul; for holiness, as it imports excellency, must needs be contrary to whatsoever is *unclean or filthy*, as it is opposed to it, 1 Cor. vii. 14. as also to a common, *unholy thing*, κοινὸν, Heb. x. 29. For *common and unclean* are both opposed to holiness, Acts x. 14. because what is un-

clean defiles the soul, and what is common debaseth it. And therefore, in order to your being holy, it is necessary, first, that your souls be not tainted or defiled with sin, which is the only uncleanness that the soul is capable of, and that which makes it loathsome and abominable in the sight of God. Hence David, when he would express his desires of being holy, he prayed *to be washed and cleansed from his sins*, Psal. li. 2, 7. And therefore till your souls be thus washed and purged from your lusts and corruptions, whatsoever outward shews you make of piety, you are still but unclean and sinful creatures. Neither are you truly holy until you are cleansed from all your defilements, and also advanced above what is common, that is, above the things of this world, the desires whereof lower and debase the soul, and by consequence make it profane or unholy. Hence Esau is said to be a *profane person*, only because he preferred earthly before heavenly things, Heb. xii. 16. And so, whosoever amongst you have any real love for this world, and value it so far as to make it your great business to get riches, honours, or the like, whatsoever pretences you make of holiness, you are, like Esau, unholy and profane persons: for true holiness always implies the soul's freedom from, and advancement above, whatsoever is unclean or common.

2. Hence, if you would understand clearly what true holiness is, take it in few terms: it is nothing else but the rectitude, or the right frame and disposition of the whole man, consisting in nothing less than a due temperance of all the faculties of the soul and members of the body, such as each of them had at their first creation, whereby every faculty of the soul and member of the body confines itself within those limits, and discharges those offices, which he that made them did at first enjoin them; the understanding, will, and affections being all placed

upon their proper objects, such as at first were designed for them: so that holiness is no particular grace or healing of some diseases in the soul, but it is a catholicon, an universal medicine, that cures the soul of all its maladies, and reduceth all its powers and faculties to their proper temper, to a sound frame and constitution; which though it be not perfectly effected in this life, yet it is for the most part, so that no distemper is any longer predominant in it. This it is to be truly holy indeed, when the soul hath attained such an excellent frame and disposition, that it is wholly carried out to God and goodness.

But that you may still more clearly apprehend the true notion of holiness, I shall endeavour to explain more particularly unto you what kind of frame and disposition it is which can properly be termed holiness, whereby the souls of some men are advanced to so high a degree of excellency above others: for which we must know there are three things especially to be considered in the souls of men, their understanding, will, and affections, in the right disposition whereof true holiness doth principally consist.

1. Therefore, he that is truly holy hath his understanding rightly informed, and his apprehensions cleared concerning God, so as to have an experimental knowledge of him: I call it an experimental knowledge, to distinguish it from those abstruse notions and metaphysical speculations which a man may have concerning God, and yet not be a holy man. And by it I mean such a knowledge of God, as none can rightly apprehend but they that have it, consisting in a due sense of his greatness, goodness, and glory upon one's own heart; whereby we have such enlarged, and, as I may so say, sensible conceptions of him, as to apprehend him infinitely great and good, wise and powerful, yea so as to apprehend him infinitely beyond our highest apprehensions of him. And whosoever thus knows God, cannot but

be so ravished with his beauty and glory, as to be always taken up with the contemplations of him : so that his soul is in a manner always fixed upon God, where it ought continually to be, still admiring and adoring the vast confluence of perfections which are centred in him. This it is to be holy indeed, and without such a sense and knowledge of God as this is, you can never pretend to be holy ; and therefore David first adviseth *to know God*, before it is possible to be so holy as to *serve him*, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Neither is it possible thus to know God, but you must of necessity be often thinking and meditating upon him, as David was, Psal. cxxxix. 18. And therefore, so long as you can go day after day without ever thinking seriously upon God, you may be confident you do not know him, and by consequence are sinful and unholy creatures ; for so David describes a wicked man, Psal. x. 4. But when the soul is possessed with such a sense of God, as will draw all its thoughts towards him, and fix them mostly if not always upon him, that is certainly so far an holy soul.

2. The understanding being thus restored to its proper habit, the will too of such as are holy cannot but act accordingly : for the will always following the ultimate dictates of the practical understanding, if that be so sound as to present God as the chiefest good, the will cannot but embrace and choose him under the same notion. And herein indeed it is that the true nature of holiness doth especially consist, even in choosing and preferring God before all things in the world besides, Lam. iii. 24. Psal. cxix. 57. Thus it is with every one that is holy ; his will is so inclined to the living God, that he accounts him his only stay and strength, his only comfort and support, his only wealth and riches, his only portion and inheritance that he either hath or is capable of : this argues a man's mind to be in a right frame,

when his will thus performeth the office it was made for.

3. The will being thus rectified, the several motions of it, which we call affections, cannot but move in a right line to this the centre of all perfections, which they always do in them that are holy. For,

1. If you be holy, your love will be placed only upon God, or be sure upon him before all things else, so as to love nothing above him, nothing before him, nothing besides him, nothing in comparison of him. This is that you are all commanded to do, Deut. vi. 5. Matt. xxii. 37 Luke xiv. 26. And therefore so long as you love riches, honours, pleasures, or any thing in comparison of God, you may pretend what you please, but you are not holy persons, for you have *no true love for God*, 1 John ii. 15. For he that loves God, must needs love him as God, that is, as the chiefest good, and, by consequence, with all his heart, which no man can do that spends his affections upon the toys and trifles of this lower world. And therefore, so long as your affections are entangled among the briars and thorns, the cares and troubles of this lower world, you may conclude your minds are much distempered, and your souls utterly void and destitute of all true holiness.

2. This sacred fire of divine love burning upon the altar of a holy heart, cannot but flame out into very ardent desires after him whom the soul loves: insomuch that a soul that is truly holy, is always panting and breathing after God, crying out with David, Psal. lxxiii. 25. xlii. 1, 2. And indeed, I know nothing that more clearly argues a soul to be unholy and out of tune, than when it hankers after the low and impertinent trash of this transient world, more than after him that made and governs all things, and who hath made our souls too of that temper, that their desires can never be satisfied with any thing but him; and therefore he hath made no-

thing to make our souls happy, intending himself and his own perfections for the only object of happiness. And therefore it is in vain for us to desire any thing besides him, seeing nothing but himself can satisfy our desires. But this profane and wicked men will never be persuaded of, which also is an undeniable argument of their profaneness and impiety ; for it shews their minds and affections to be strangely disordered, which they never are in those who are truly holy.

3. The desires of a real saint being thus continually carried towards God, he cannot but rejoice in the enjoyment of his presence, the apprehensions of his favour, and in every thing that any ways relates unto him ; for our joy is always acted according to our love and desire. What we love and desire most, we cannot but take most pleasure and delight in ; and he that is truly holy, loving, and desiring nothing in comparison of God, his affection of joy must needs be streamed into the same channel, so as *always to rejoice in the Lord*, Phil. iv. 4. Heb. iii. 17. This demonstrates a man to be of an excellent temper indeed, when he hath got that command over himself, and that mastery over the world, that he can still rejoice in the Lord, both when he hath and when he hath not any thing else to rejoice in ; for this argues a man's mind to be so strong and sound, and so firmly fixed upon God, that nothing is able to disturb or move it.

4. Hence also it follows, that such a person makes God his only stay and confidence, *trusting on him*, as well as rejoicing in him, *with all his heart*, Prov. iii. 5. Yea, whatsoever happens, such a one will never let go his hold, but still keep fast to him, as knowing him to be both willing and able to deliver and protect him, and hath promised *never to leave him nor forsake him*, Heb. xiii. 5. Hence it is that he that is truly pious, as he looks not for any good from this

world, so neither doth he fear any evil that may happen in it; whatsoever storms and tempests arise without him, his hope is still anchored upon the rock of ages; which makes him always to have peace and tranquillity within, Isa. xxvi. 3, 4. Oh! what an excellent temper is every saint then of! what a happy condition is he in, when nothing in the world is able to molest or affright him, but in the various changes of this inconstant world, his heart is always fixed, trusting upon God!

5. I shall instance only in one more passion, and that is fear, which though it be ordinarily opposed to trusting, yet in those who are truly pious, it is so rarely tempered, that as they trust in nothing but God, so neither do they fear any thing in the world but him. They trust in none but him, because they know that none but he can do them good; and they fear none but him, because they know that none but he can bring any evil upon them. This therefore makes them so much to desire his favour, and to dread nothing in the world but his displeasure, so as *to make him their only fear and their only dread*, Isa. viii. 13. And whosoever is thus possessed with the true fear of God, he cannot but express it both by a seemly reverence in his presence, and likewise by an universal obedience to all his precepts. And hence it comes to pass, that they who are truly holy, as they do not, so they dare not do any thing which God hath forbidden, nor yet leave any thing undone which he hath been pleased to command, as knowing that by this means they would offend and displease him.

Thus now you see what it is to be holy indeed, even to have all the faculties of your souls, your understanding, will, and affections, all reduced to such an excellent temper and disposition as to be inclined to God, and meet together in him as their proper centre. And if your souls be once made thus sound

and whole, your bodies will be soon brought into subjection; so that your outward actions will be as good as your inward disposition is, and your behaviour towards men as excellent in its kind as your carriage towards God; so that *you will be holy*, as the apostle here saith, *in all manner of conversation*.

But before we come to that, we must in the next place consider in what sense you are here commanded *to be holy as God is holy*; for it is plain that you are not only enjoined here to be of that excellent and divine temper wherein true holiness doth consist; but the very holiness of God himself is here propounded as a pattern and example for you to walk by. *As he who hath called you is holy*, not as he is omniscient, not as he is almighty, not as he is eternal, but, *as he is holy, so be ye holy*; that is, do you follow after and practise the same kind of holiness which is in God, so far as you are capable of it. Now by the holiness of God, as I have shewn, the Scripture understands his supreme excellency, majesty, and supereminency above all things, and by consequence above whatsoever you are able to attain to; therefore it cannot be expected, neither is it here commanded, that you should be holy in the same degree as he is; but that your holiness should be of the same nature that his is of, consisting in the excellency of your temper and disposition, as his doth; so as to be and live as like to him as possibly you can. Hence holiness in Scripture is called the image of God, because by it we imitate and resemble him; yea, it is called the divine nature too, 2 Pet. . . 4. because his nature is not only holy, but holiness itself; and therefore, if we be truly holy as he is, we may well be said to partake of his divine nature.

And verily, he that is truly holy, must needs *be holy as God is holy*, so as to come as near him in all acts of holiness as his nature is capable of: for as

God loves and rejoiceth in himself, so doth every one that is holy love and rejoice in none but him, as we have seen already. But besides that, this command, *to be holy as God is*, implies that we ought to imitate him in all such acts of holiness wherein he hath manifested the excellency of his nature to us as far as our natures or faculties can possibly reach; *ex. gr.*

1. One great excellency we apprehend in God is, that he is just and righteous, rendering to every one according to their deserts, without respect of persons. So ought we to be; we must *render to every one their due*, Rom. xiii. 7 you must not *defraud or over-reach each other*, 1 Thess. iv. 6. but still square all our actions according to our Saviour's rule, Matt. vii. 12. And whosoever doth not so, is not holy as God is holy; *for the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*, Psal. cxlv. 17

2. He is a God infinitely gracious and merciful, as he is so infinitely just as to punish every sin that is committed, so is he so infinitely merciful too as to pardon every sinner that repenteth: and they that do not repent too, he still spares them, and doth not presently execute the rigour of his law upon them, but gives them time to consider, that they may at length repent and turn unto him. Neither is there any of his perfections that he hath more clearly unveiled to us than this, both with his own mouth proclaiming it to us, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7 and by all his prophets and apostles in all ages, particularly Psal. ciii. 7, 8, 9, 10. Now as he is to you, if you would be like to him, you must be so to one another; not peevish and froward, not revengeful and malicious, but slow to anger, merciful and gracious unto all. Though you every day transgress God's laws, and so incur his displeasure, yet you see by experience he hath not yet revenged himself as he might do of you; but you are still in the land of the living,

monuments of his infinite mercy and compassion towards you. And so ought you to be to all others, passing by all wrongs and injuries which you either do or think you do receive from others, so as not to suffer your minds to be disturbed, or your passions discomposed, by any thing that men can do, as knowing that in this respect you are to be like to God himself, *merciful as he is merciful, and perfect as he is perfect*, Matt. v. 48. Luke vi. 36.

3. The great God, he is good and loving, kind and liberal unto all, yea, to his very enemies themselves. And so must you be too, if you would be like to him, as your Saviour himself hath taught you, Matt. v. 44, 45. And verily, if you be holy as God is holy, you cannot but be thus loving as he is loving unto all, so as to extend your love and charity to all that you converse with, who have any occasion for it; loving not only those of your acquaintance, kindred, party, or religion, in the world, but all mankind that you can any way manifest your love unto. This is to be like God indeed; and whosoever comes short of this, hath not as yet the image and portraiture of God enstamped upon him. And therefore tell me not of your being holy, so long as you confine your love or charity to sects and factions, or to any particular persons in the world. Give me a man whose love can find no bounds, but that reacheth as high as to the eternal God, and as far as to all the creatures in the world that bear his image and likeness. Of such a one I would say, as our Saviour did of Nathaniel, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*: behold a real saint, a truly pious and holy person, one holy as God is holy. For this our Saviour himself maketh an infallible sign or character of his disciples, that is, of true saints; *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another*, John xiii. 35.

Lastly, God is so holy as to be *holy*, not only in

some, but *all his works*, Psal. cxlv. 17. Every thing he speaks, every thing he wills, every thing he doth, is holy, and just, and good ; and so ought you to be holy too, not only in some, or many, or most of your actions, but as it is here expressed, *in all manner of conversation* ; of which hereafter.

In the mean while, from what we have already discoursed upon this subject, you may observe what great mistakes there are in the world concerning holiness, and how fearfully they are deceived who fancy and boast themselves to be the saints of God, a holy people, merely upon the account of the separate congregations and new modes of church-government and discipline ; as if such things as these are, could be any argument of real sanctity. I bless God for it ; I heartily wish they were all as holy as they pretend to be : but verily, whilst they place holiness in such things as these are, they must give me leave to say, that I fear they do not know as yet what true holiness is ; for it is certainly a thing quite of another and of a much higher nature than they would make it ; consisting in nothing less than the right disposition of all the faculties of our souls, and in the due regulation of all our thoughts, words, and actions, both towards God and men. This is the holiness that I would have you to follow after, as that without which you can never see God. And therefore, let me advise you not to take up or content yourselves with any other holiness but this. Do not think yourselves to be holy persons, because you profess the Christian religion, because you come to church, hear sermons, pray now and then, or the like. For all this you may do, and yet be unholy here, and unhappy for ever : for I tell you again, holiness doth not consist in any particular acts or duties ; but in the rectitude or right disposition of the whole man, so that it runs through and rectifies all the faculties of the soul and members of the body ; yea,

all the thoughts and affections, all the words and actions of your whole life. This is true holiness indeed, and whatsoever else comes under that notion, is nothing but hypocrisy and deceit, wherewith millions have been cheated into eternal flames. And that you might not follow after them, I have endeavoured to explain unto you the true notion of holiness, which I therefore beg of you to labour after, so as to make it your design in this world to attain unto it.



SERMON XCV.

CHRIST'S LIFE A PATTERN OF HOLINESS TO CHRISTIANS.

1 PET. i. 15.

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

HAVING thus considered the pattern and the command of holiness, how God is said to be holy, and how we are commanded to *be holy as he is holy*, we are now come to the extent and latitude of this holiness; it is to be *in all manner of conversation*, and it is in this wherein our holiness is to resemble God's, as well as in the nature of it: for as God is *holy in all his works*, so are we too to be holy in all our works, Psal. cxlv. 17 or, as it is here expressed, *in all manner of conversation*.

Where, first, by conversation we are to understand the whole course of our life in this world, which is therefore called *ἀναστροφή*, *conversation*, because we are still conversant about something or other, winding and turning ourselves, as the word signifies, first to one thing, then to another. As where the apostle saith, *only let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ*, Phil. i. 27. that is, live and carry yourselves in this world according to the precepts of the Gospel, as becometh those who profess so excellent a religion as Christ hath established in the world; so here, where we are commanded *to be*

holy in our conversation, the meaning is, that we should be holy, not only in some few acts, but in the whole course and tenor of our lives; so that holiness should be our main business, our principal care and study in this life. We must not be holy by fits only, or now and then, as occasion serves, or humour and interest lead us; but holiness must be our constant business, our daily employment, the way we always walk in. Oh! this is much to be considered; for many men can make a shift to carry themselves after a holy manner at some times, and upon some occasions: but that will not serve their turn; your conversations, your constant way of living and conversing in the world, must *be holy*. Yea,

In the next place, you must *be holy in all manner of conversation*, ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ, *in all conversation*; whithersoever you turn yourselves, whatsoever you converse with, you are still to be holy: so that not to be holy in all things, is to be holy in nothing as you ought to be. Nothing less than all holiness will serve your turn, it must be holiness *in all manner of conversation*.

1. You must be all holy *subjectivè*, in respect of yourselves: you must be all over holy: all the faculties of your souls must be holy, and so must all the members of your bodies be holy too: your understandings should be holy, your judgments holy, your conscience holy, your wills holy, your memories holy your affections all holy: you should have holy loves and holy hatreds, holy joys and holy griefs, holy hopes and holy fears, holy desires and holy detestations. Thus that soul that is holy at all, it is all holy; it is like that part of the temple that was called *sanctum sanctorum*, the holy of holies, where there was nothing but what was holy in an eminent and peculiar manner. And as the soul of a true saint is thus like the holy of holies, so is his body like the other parts of the temple, where all the instruments and utensils in their several kinds were

sacred and holy. There was the holy oil, the holy perfume, the holy garments, every thing was holy ; nothing unclean, nothing common or profane was to come thither. Thus it is with every true saint ; his body is *the temple of God*, for *the Spirit of God dwelleth in him*, 1 Cor. iii. 16. And therefore all the members or instruments of it should be holy, the eyes holy, the ears holy, the tongue, the hands, the feet, and every thing else holy, all reduced to an holy temper, and employed always about holy designs and projects, devoted wholly and solely *to the honour and glory of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Hence the apostle prays the Thessalonians *might be sanctified wholly in spirit, and soul, and body*, 1 Thess. v. 23. Where by the spirit we are to understand, as the ancient fathers did, the highest part of man, his reason and understanding ; by the soul we are to understand the elective part, the will, which in Scripture is frequently called the soul ; by the body we are to understand the brutish or sensitive part ; so that these three parts make up the *ὅλον κλήρον ἀνθρώπου*, *the whole of a man* ; and therefore the apostle desires that all three *might be sanctified*, that so the whole man might be made holy. From whence it is plain, that sanctification is of the whole man, not only of any part or parcel of it. If the whole be not holy, the whole is sinful : if a man be not thoroughly sanctified, so as to have all the powers of his soul restored to their proper temper and constitution, he can be holy in nothing, much less *in all manner of conversation*.

2. True holiness is universal also in respect of the object ; *it hath respect unto all the commands of God*, Psal. cxix. 6. It equally respecteth the commands of both tables, and every command that is in either of them, in exercising whatsoever graces, performing whatsoever duties we owe either to God or man. This is *to be holy in all manner of conversation* indeed,

when we carry ourselves after an holy and godly manner towards all persons whatsoever that we converse with, as the apostle did, Acts xxiv. 16.

First, he that is truly pious hath be sure a great care to pay homage and worship which he oweth to Almighty God, not only loving of him, longing for him, rejoicing in him, trusting on him, and fearing him above all things in the world besides, as I have shewn already, but likewise performing all such external worship which is due unto him, with that reverence and devotion as becometh so great a work as that is. For he that is not holy in his conversation towards God, be sure can never be holy in his conversation towards men. But in performing our duties unto Almighty God, we do in our capacity converse with himself, and therefore ought to have a special regard to our outward as well as inward deportment before him. As our thoughts are all the while to be fixed upon him, and our affections moved suitably unto him, so are our outward gestures also to be seemly and reverent towards him, such as may testify our acknowledgment of his supreme authority over us, and our constant dependence upon him. Hence Solomon commands, Eccles. v. 1. *Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God*; where the part is put for the whole, the feet for all the body. And if we must take care of our very feet, the lowest part of our body, much more of our hands, and eyes, and heads, and all other members of our body, to see that they deport themselves so as to express and manifest our fear and dread of him, before whom we are.

Thus Moses was commanded *to uncover his feet when he drew near to God*, Exod. iii. 5. and so was Joshua, Josh. v. 15. Whence discalceation, or uncovering the feet, was always used as an expression of reverence to God in the Eastern churches, especially among the Jews; as uncovering the head is

still among us. And whosoever dare presume to offer up his prayers, or to perform any religious duty to the most high God, in an unseemly or irreverent manner, he thereby manifesteth himself to be an unholy and profane person, one that hath not any true sense of God's power and majesty upon his heart ; for if he had, he could not but abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes, and so carry himself with all humility and reverence imaginable before him ; as indeed we are all commanded to do, Lev. x. 3. For to sanctify the Lord is nothing else but to agnize and express our acknowledgment of his sanctity or holiness, that is, of his supreme excellency, power, and supereminency over us and all the world. But how can we possibly do this if we behave ourselves no otherwise in his presence than as if he was our fellow-creature ? Is this to worship him ? Is this to celebrate his praise and glory ? Is this to sanctify him when we draw nigh unto him ? How can that man be said to sanctify the Lord of hosts in praying to him, who dares at the same time to sit as confidently before him, and talk as malapertly to him, as if he was but his fellow-worm ? How can that man be said to sanctify the Lord of hosts, in hearing of his word, who at the same time thinks scorn to veil his bonnet, or uncover his head before him ? How can that man be said to sanctify the Lord of hosts, in receiving the blessed body and blood of his only Son, who at the same time will not vouchsafe him so much as his knee in honour of so great a mercy as this is ? Is this to sanctify the Lord of hosts ? Or rather, what is, if this be not, to confront his majesty, to profane his ordinances, to vilify his word, to despise his presence, and to disparage the greatest of his mercies as nothing worth ? And yet, how many have we among us, who would therefore be accounted more holy than others, because they are so unholy themselves as to express no re-

verence or solemnity at all in the holy presence of the most holy God? But as for you, if ever you desire to manifest yourselves to be holy indeed, whensoever you converse with the most high God in his sacred ordinances, you must be sure to behave yourselves with that shamefacedness and modesty, with that reverence and humility, as becometh those who believe themselves to be in the special presence of the supreme Being of the world. For otherwise, whatsoever pretences you make to holiness, you may be confident you are not holy, as you are here commanded to be, *in all manner of conversation*: for you are not holy in your conversation towards God. And if you be not holy in this, be sure you are holy in nothing. And therefore, above all things you must have an especial care of this, even to perform your devoirs to the most high God after an holy and solemn manner.

Secondly, your holiness must also shew forth itself in your conversation towards men. For although all holiness be referred immediately unto God as its proper and adequate object, yet seeing our conversation towards men is to be regulated by the laws of God, and grounded upon obedience to him, that also both may and ought to be holy; so that your just and righteous actions towards men, ought likewise to be holy and pious actions towards God, as being sincerely performed out of love to his person, and obedience to his precepts. And verily, holiness being the rectitude or right disposition of the whole man, wheresoever it is, it cannot but exert and put forth itself in all the actions of a man's life, conforming all and every one of them to the laws and commands of God. Where by actions I mean whatsoever a man doth wherein his neighbour is concerned, inwardly in his thoughts and affections, or outwardly in his words and actions, properly so called, towards him. For he that would be truly holy, must make

conscience of ordering every one of them according to the rules laid down in the holy Scriptures.

1. As for the thoughts: although they fall not under the cognizance of men, unless they break forth into words or actions, yet he that is truly holy hath an especial care of them, to keep them also within their proper bounds and limits; so that as he never thinks too highly of himself, so neither doth he think too lowly of his neighbours; he knowing himself better than others, and being thoroughly acquainted with his own failures and imperfections, cannot but look upon himself as worse than all others, 1 Tim. i. 15. and by consequence think all others better than himself, Phil. ii. 3. And therefore he dares not judge or censure any man living but himself, as being always mindful of his Saviour's words, Matt. vii. 1, 2, 3, 4. This is the proper effect of holiness where-soever it comes; thus to keep a man humble in his own eyes, and to make him think well of all men, ill of none; yea, though he sees a man fall before his eyes, yet he doth not think him worse than himself, as still knowing more ill by himself than he doth by him.

2. His thoughts running thus regularly concerning his neighbour, his affections cannot but move accordingly. And therefore, thinking well of all men, he cannot but love and honour all men, 1 Pet. ii. 17. yea, even his very enemies, Matt. v. 44. Though they be enemies unto him, he dares not be so to them; so that whatsoever evil he receiveth from them, he still endeavours to do them all the good he can, according to the command that is laid upon him, Rom. xii. 20, 21. This is a true saint indeed; when a man's affections are kept in that excellent order and discipline, that affronts and injuries themselves are not able to trouble or discompose them, but whatsoever others do or speak against him, his love is still the same, his affections are unchange-

able towards them. This is that which true holiness requires and acts, wheresoever it is. And therefore wheresoever you see envy or malice, feuds or animosities, strife or contention allowed and practised, you may conclude there is no such thing as holiness there; for that is always accompanied with love and amity, with peace and concord, and with all other virtues whatsoever that spring from the right disposition of men's affections, wherein true holiness doth principally consist; and therefore it can never be separated from a meek and quiet, a loving and peaceable spirit, Heb. xii. 14.

3. The thoughts and affections of a truly pious man towards others being thus rarely tempered, his words cannot but be framed suitably unto them: for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, Matt. xii. 34. That is, as a man's heart is, so will his words be. If a man thinks no ill of his neighbour, he will much less speak ill of him; nay, he cannot do it, for if he should his tongue would contradict his heart, he would speak what he doth not think; which be sure no man that is truly holy ever doth. And besides that, to speak evil of any man is expressly contrary to the command of God, Tit. iii. 2. And therefore holiness disposing and modelling the whole man according to the word of God; if he that is holy should speak ill of any man, he would act contrary to his temper and disposition. Hence therefore, if you would manifest yourselves to be saints indeed, as you must not lie, nor swear, nor curse, nor blaspheme God, nor deride religion, and the like; so neither must you slander or backbite your neighbour, but as you ought to speak of other men's virtues only behind their backs, so must you speak of their vices only before their faces, and that too not with rancour, malice, or passion, but with the spirit of meekness and sobriety, that the calmness and gravity of your words may shew forth

the excellent disposition which holiness hath reduced your hearts into.

4. As holiness thus refines a man's thoughts, regulates his affections, and bridles his tongue, so doth it likewise rectify all his actions, as to those he converseth with; so that he cannot, he dare not but fulfil all the relations, discharge all the trusts, and perform all the duties that he stands any ways obliged to do: whatsoever company he is in, whatsoever employment he is about, whatsoever he doth or doth not, he hath still a care of the main chance, even to keep his conscience void of offence both towards God and men. For holiness, wheresoever it is, as it is always sincere, so it is universal too. It admits of no ifs and ands; no buts and exceptions, but carries a man with an even and steady course through his whole duty. It will not suffer a man to swear any more than to lie; nor yet to lie any more than to swear. It makes a man as afraid to cheat privately in his shop, as he is to rob publicly in the roads; and as cautious to wrong none, as he is desirous none should wrong him. He dares no more deal unjustly or fraudulently with his neighbour, than he dares to neglect his daily prayers and praises unto God. Insomuch that, as Zechariah prophesied, that in the latter days, after the coming of Christ, *there should be holiness to the Lord written upon the very bells of the horses*, Zech. xiv. 20. so is it with every true saint, *holiness to the Lord* may be written upon all his actions; yea, upon every thing he thinks, or speaks, or doth. And verily it is such an universal holiness as this is, that will stand you in stead another day; you had as good be holy in nothing, as not in all things. A partial holiness never yet did, nor ever will do, any man good; but it hath occasioned the ruin and destruction of thousands, who, being more nice and scrupulous in some things than their neighbours are, have therefore

thought themselves to be truly holy. But this is a great and dangerous mistake; which I desire you in an especial manner to beware that you be not overtaken with it. Never think yourselves to be holy at all, unless you be holy in all manner of conversation, holy in your thoughts, holy in your affections, holy in your words, and holy in all your actions, both to God and men. Neither must you think that you may be holy at one time and not at another. No, he that is ever holy is holy ever, in all places, upon all occasions, at all times and seasons, all his life long, Luke i. 74, 75. For holiness is an universal principle that runs through the whole course of a man's life; yea, and wheresoever it is once sown, it always comes up, grows higher and higher, and still brings forth more and more fruit, so that it still adds one grace to another, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6. yea, and it is always adding too one degree of grace to another, until at length every spark of grace be blown up into a flame of glory: insomuch that they who are truly holy, never think themselves to be holy enough; but the more holy they are, the more holy they desire to be, still aspiring higher and higher, till at length they commence perfect and glorified saints in heaven.

But then you may say, if this be the nature of true holiness, who then can be holy? or how is it possible for us to attain to such an excellent spirit, as to be thus holy *in all manner of conversation*? To which I answer, first, it is true indeed, that it is a very hard and difficult matter to be truly holy, whatsoever the great pretenders to it may fancy or boast. For questionless, as holiness is the highest excellency that we can ever attain unto; so is it the hardest matter in the world to attain unto it. However, in the second place, I answer, that how hard soever it be, yet it is possible for any or every one of us to be holy. For as our Saviour said in the like case, Matt.

xix. 23, 24, 25, 26. so say I ; though it be impossible for men ever to make themselves holy ; yet with God all things are possible, and by consequence this too. There is no mind so dark, but he can illuminate it : no heart so hard, but he can soften it : no will so crooked, but he can straighten it : no affection so disorderly, but he can regulate it : no soul so foul, but he can cleanse it : no man so great a sinner, but he is able to make him as great a saint.

Neither is he less willing than able to do it for us, if we will but make use of the means which himself hath prescribed in order thereunto : so that if any of you be not as holy as I have shewn you ought to be, it is most certainly your own faults ; neither can you blame any one but yourselves for it.

But I hope that what you have heard already concerning the excellency of holiness, hath wrought so far upon you, that you are now really desirous to be holy indeed, and long to know how you may come to be so. And to satisfy your desires, I shall endeavour to acquaint you with the ready way to do it. But you must give me leave to tell you, that I fear there are but few among you that will mind it ; and that my pains will be in vain to many of you. For I know your hearts are generally so much taken up with the affairs of this life, that you will hardly be persuaded to observe these rules exactly which I shall shew you to be necessary in order to your being holy. However, it will be worth my while to declare them to you, if but any one of you should be prevailed upon to observe them. And who knows but that whilst I am speaking to your ears, the great God himself may speak so effectually to your hearts, that many of you may at this time be converted from sin to holiness, and from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, so as for the future to become real and true saints ? Or howsoever,

whether you hear, or whether you forbear, I must do my duty, and leave the issue unto God.

First therefore, if you would be holy indeed, you must resolve beforehand to make it your great care and principal business in this world to endeavour after it. You must not think that it is so easy a matter to be holy, that you need not much concern yourselves, nor take any great pains about it. For I verily believe one of the principal reasons why there are so few holy persons in the world is, because most persons think it is so easy a matter to be holy, that if they do but read good books, and come to church now and then, they cannot miss of it. But do not mistake yourselves; for I dare assure you, that if ever any of you shall be made holy, as I hope many of you will, you will find there is a great deal of care and pains to be taken before you can arrive at so high and excellent a disposition as that is; you must not only seek it, but you must seek it in the first place, or else you are not likely to find it, Matt. vi. 33. Holiness is the strait gate, which you must strive to enter at, Luke xiii. 24. And therefore, if you really desire to be holy, you must set yourselves in good earnest upon the prosecution of it, before all things in the world besides, still projecting and contriving how to get your lusts rooted up, and true grace and piety planted in your souls. You must not make it only your business by the bye, but your only business; or else you will never be able to effect it. And let me tell you this for your comfort and encouragement, that although none ever yet did, or ever can attain to holiness. that sought it only after a careless, indifferent, and perfunctory manner; so none that sincerely seek and endeavour after it before all things else, ever did or ever can fail of attaining to it. And whatsoever pains it costs you, it cannot but be worth your while, as knowing that holiness is not only the highest, but the only excellency

that your souls are capable of; and therefore no care, no pains, no cost, can be too much in order to it. Well then, if you cordially desire as you pretend, to be holy, as you are here commanded, in all manner of conversation, let this be the first step you take in order to it. Halt no longer between two opinions; but resolve fully and stedfastly with yourselves, by the blessing and assistance of Almighty God, that from this day forward you will make holiness your only aim and design in this world; and, by consequence, that you will leave no stone unturned, but use all means imaginable that may any ways conduce to your being and living holy. Do this, and your work will be half done.

2. Your mind being thus inflamed with the desire of holiness, and armed with resolutions to pursue it, as humble supplicants, in a reverend and solemn manner betake yourselves to Almighty God, the only fountain of all true grace and virtue, implore his mercy, and beseech him for his Son's sake to enstamp his image once more upon you, and to make you holy as he is holy. Say with David, Psal. ii. 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10. and with Ephraim in the prophet, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God*, Jer. xxxi. 18. xvii. 14. Let this be your daily, your constant prayer, uttered not only with your mouths, but from the very bottom of your hearts, earnestly desiring nothing in the world so much as this. This is the way, and the only way that the apostle directs us to for the getting of wisdom, or true piety, Jam. i. 5. But for the better understanding of this, consider,

1. None but God can make you holy; it is not in your own strength and power to do it. When man stood, it was in his power to throw himself down; but now he is down, it is not in his power to raise himself up again. He that was holy could make himself sinful; but we that are sinful cannot make

ourselves holy. And therefore, never expect to be made holy by yourselves, by the strength of your reason, or the feigned power of your own will. For I know, *that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*, Jer. x. 23. You can and ought to use all means that conduce to your being holy; but it is God alone that can make them effectual. For every good thing comes from him, Jam. i. 17. And that faith whereby we are saved from our sins, and made truly pious, is expressly said to be *the gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. It is God's gift; and therefore we can neither work it in ourselves, nor yet do any thing whereby to merit it from him: but when we have done all we can, we must acknowledge it to come only from his free grace and mercy; for it is his gift. And it is well it is so: for, for mine own part, had I nothing else to trust to but my own powers and faculties, I should despair of ever being so happy as to be truly holy. But our comfort is, that what is wanting in ourselves, Omnipotence itself is ready to supply us with it.

2. As none but God can make us holy, so we can never expect that he should do it for us, unless we beg it of him. For all the promises that he hath made us to this purpose have this proviso or condition annexed to them, that we still pray to him for what he hath promised to us, Ezek. xxxvi. 7.

3. But if we earnestly desire, and sincerely pray for, true grace and holiness, we may be confident that he will bestow it upon us. For we have his express word for it, Matt. vii. 7 xxi. 22. John xv 24. But you must remember this caution, that it is not praying only now and then will do the business; but you must continue instant in prayers, as St. Paul did, 2 Cor xii. 8. and as our Saviour himself teacheth us to do, Luke xviii. 1, 2. And questionless, we may lay this down as an undoubted truth, that never any yet did, nor ever shall, fail of being made really and

truly holy, that made it his constant business sincerely to pray to Almighty God, that he might be made so; and therefore, as ever you desire holiness, never leave off praying for it.

3. In order to your being holy, it is necessary also that you often read and hear the word of God both read and preached: for *faith comes by hearing*, Rom. x. 17 where under faith all true graces whatsoever are comprehended, which God doth ordinarily infuse into us by the ministry of the word. And therefore, although we both may and ought to beg this unspeakable mercy from him, even to be made holy, yet we must not expect that he should come down and give it us as it were with his own hands; but we must wait upon him for it in his public ordinances, there expecting his holy Spirit to accompany his word into our hearts, and by it reduce them into their proper frame and constitution again, so as to make us like itself, holy.

4. Having made this progress in the way to holiness, stay not here, but still go on to exercise yourselves continually in divine and heavenly meditations. Accustom yourselves frequently to abstract and draw off your thoughts from the world, and all things here below; and to raise them up to God, and those glories that are above, so as often to be contemplating upon the vanity of the world, the sinfulness of sin, the perfections of God, the excellency of religion, the merits of Christ, the beauty of holiness, and the transcendency of that happiness which attends it in the world to come. For such contemplations as these are, will very much conduce to the refining your thoughts, the reforming your judgments, and so to the reducing your affections into their proper order again, and so to the making of you sincerely holy. By this means it was that St. Paul became so eminent a saint, because *his conversation was always in heaven*, Phil. iii. 20. This is the

way to be *holy in all manner of conversation upon earth, even by having our conversations always in heaven.*

5. The last and principal thing of all to be done, in order to your being holy, is to believe in Jesus Christ; where, by being in Christ, I mean trusting or confiding in his merits and mediation, for two things especially.

1. For such influences of God's grace and Spirit, as may make us holy according to his promises: for it is certain, that none can make us holy but God; and it is certain that we have no ground to expect that he should do it for us, but his own promise; and it is as certain still, that all his promises are made and confirmed to us only in the blood of Christ, 2 Cor. i. 20. Here therefore is the great duty that is incumbent upon all that desire to be holy, even to trust in the merits of Christ for God's performance of his promises to us, such especially wherein he hath promised to make us holy, such as Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27 Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. xxxi. 33. These and such like are the promises of the new covenant sealed to us in the blood of Christ. And that which is required on our parts, is firmly to believe that God for Christ's sake will perform those his gracious promises to us; that he will be as good as his word, and crown our sincere endeavours after holiness with that success, that we shall be made really and sincerely holy. And when we earnestly desire, and sincerely pray for grace and holiness, we are stedfastly to believe that God for Christ's sake will hear and answer us; for that he will do so, Christ himself hath told us, and we are bound to believe him, John xvi. 23. And that it is not only lawful, but necessary for us, thus to believe that for Christ's sake we shall receive what we pray for, Christ himself hath likewise assured us, Mark xi. 14. which is principally to be understood of the prayers which we make for the assistance of God's grace and Spirit, in order to the

making us holy; which whosoever sincerely prays for, and at the same time truly believes that his request for Christ's sake shall be granted to him, he cannot miss of, for Christ hath said he shall receive it. And therefore, as you hope and believe in Christ for the pardon of your sins and the justification of your persons, so you must trust and depend upon him likewise for the subduing of your lusts, and the sanctification of your natures; that is, for the making of you really and sincerely holy.

2. The other thing which you are to trust in Christ for is the acceptance of your sincere instead of perfect holiness: for the command is here expressed, *to be holy as God is holy, in all manner of conversation*; but this you can never perfectly be, so long as you are in this world: but after your highest attainments, there will be still something of irregularity and disorder in you, both in your nature, and also in your actions. However, in the use of the means which we already discoursed of, none of you but even in this life, by the assistance of God's grace, may reach so far as to be sincerely holy; that is, to have all the faculties of your souls reduced, though not into a perfect, yet into a very good order and excellent disposition, so as to carry yourselves for the main very well and regularly both towards God and man, all the days of your life, neither wilfully committing any sin, nor neglecting any duty which is required of you, but still endeavouring to the utmost of your knowledge and power to perform universal and constant obedience to all the commands of God. And this you are bound to believe, that God for Christ's sake will accept of, in lieu of that perfect holiness which is required of you: for this is that the Scripture doth plainly assert, Eph. i. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 5. And indeed, this is the great privilege that is offered to us in the Gospel covenant, or the covenant of grace, that God will now accept

of our sincere, instead of perfect holiness, by reason of that absolutely perfect obedience which Christ hath performed in our steads, or however by the virtue of his merit and mediation for us : by which means, whosoever among you shall perform sincere obedience to Almighty God to the utmost of your power, it shall be as acceptable to him in Jesus Christ, as the very praises and services of the holy angels and glorified saints in heaven are. And therefore, although in this life you cannot be so perfectly holy as they are, yet you may be so *holy in all manner of conversation*, that God will accept of you as well as if ye were holy in all manner of perfection ; though not for any intrinsic virtue or value in yourselves or works, yet by reason of Christ's merits and righteousness imputed to you, and to all those that truly believe in him : for this is that unspeakable benefit which we receive by Christ, that he helps our weaknesses by his own almighty Spirit implanted in us, and supplies our defects by his all-sufficient merit imputed to us.

Thus now you see how you may all become holy, *holy as God is, in all manner of conversation*. I intended in the next place to have presented you with some considerations which might have excited and stirred you up to the use of the said means, and to the serious prosecution of the holiness we have now been speaking of ; but I hope that labour may be now spared : for now you know how to become holy ; how to have your headstrong corruptions bridled, and your unruly passions tamed ; how to have your understandings cleared, and your judgments rectified ; how to have your consciences cleansed, and your thoughts refined ; how to have your wills sanctified, your affections regulated, and your whole souls reduced into an angelic, yea, a divine frame and constitution, so as to be like not only to the best of creatures, but to your most holy

Creator himself. Now, I say, you know this, methinks you should not need any other arguments to move you to put it into execution ; but should be more ready to labour after holiness than I can be to persuade you to it. Howsoever, you shall give me leave to mind you only of two things, which I hope, if seriously weighed, will do the work.

1. Consider, there is no other way imaginable for you to be happy either in this life or that which is to come, but by being holy. Though God blessed you with large estates, with great natural parts, and with a confluence of all earthly enjoyments, what will all these things signify when you go into the other world, and leave them behind you for others to be cheated and ensnared by them as yourselves have been ? What advantage will you then receive from all those things which you here take so much care and pains about ? Surely none at all ; nothing but holiness will then stand you in any stead, without which you neither shall nor can see God ; for you will not be qualified for the contemplation and enjoyment of his divine perfections, unless you be first made *holy as he is holy*. Do not therefore fool and deceive yourselves with groundless and vain conceits of heaven ; for I dare assure you, you will never come there, unless you be first made holy, and sanctified throughout.

2. Consider, as there is none can be happy but he that is first holy, so none can be holy but he shall be happy too ; this, many thousands have experienced already, who once were upon earth as we now are, but now they are glorified saints in heaven. But how came they thither but by being saints upon earth first ? They were first holy, and so they became happy ; and this is the way that you must take if ever you desire to go to them. Let me therefore beseech you to dally no longer in a matter of such importance as this is ; but set yourselves in good

earnest upon the use of all those means whereby you may become *holy as God is holy*; which if ye would all do, how happy would you be! How certainly would you then become all glorified saints in heaven, and be as really happy in all manner of perfection hereafter, as you are *holy* here *in all manner of conversation*!



SERMON XCVI.

THE HOLINESS OF CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO BE
EMINENT.

MATT. v. 20.

For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven.

WHATSOEVER other things we may differ in, I am sure there is one thing wherein we all agree, and that is, we all desire to be happy: we would all be preserved or freed from all grief and trouble, from all care and fear, from whatsoever can either discompose our minds, or disturb our rest and quiet: yea, we all desire to have our desires completely satisfied; which seeing we cannot have whilst we are upon earth, hence we all desire to go to heaven, the place fitted and appointed to make men happy. And therefore I am willing to persuade myself, that the next to your performing your homage and devotions to Almighty God, the great end of your coming hither this day, is to learn how to get to heaven, that so you may live and be happy for ever. But let me tell you, it is no easy matter to come thither; for *the way is strait, and the gate narrow, that leadeth unto everlasting life, and there be but few that find it.* But give me leave to acquaint you withal, to ~~your~~ unspeakable comfort, that though it be dif-

ficult, it is not impossible for every soul here present to be advanced to eternal glory ; and it will be your own faults if you miss of it ; which that you may not do, I shall endeavour to do my duty in directing you in the way to heaven, shewing you by what means you may all ere long partake of the greatest happiness that it is possible for your natures to be capable of.

Now for this end, I must first mind you of that which I suppose you all know and believe already, even that it is only by Jesus Christ that you can be saved ; and that he is able to save to the utmost all those that come unto God by him : for this is the fundamental article of that religion which you all profess ; and he deserves not the name of a Christian that doth not believe it. And although I dare not assert, that it is indispensably necessary for every one throughly to understand the mysterious way and method of man's salvation by Jesus Christ, yet this is a certain and undoubted truth, that none can, that doth not believe he may be saved by him : and therefore it highly concerns us all to believe that Jesus Christ, the only Son of the living God, is the only Saviour of mankind : that he came from heaven to earth on purpose to make way for us to go from earth to heaven : that all his sufferings were only upon our account ; and that he by them hath made such a satisfaction to God's justice for man's sins, that all that truly repent and believe the Gospel, may be pardoned and accepted of, in and through him who *was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21

This being premised concerning the possibility of our salvation only by Jesus Christ, it follows in course, that if ever we desire to be saved, we must of necessity observe the rules which he hath prescribed in order thereunto : for seeing it is he alone that can bring us unto heaven, we must needs ac-

knowledge, that he knew best what we must do that we may come thither : and seeing he came into the world on purpose to save us, it cannot be imagined that he should impose any thing upon us, but what is absolutely necessary for our salvation ; and therefore it behoves us very much frequently to consult the Gospels, and consider seriously with ourselves, what he there saith we must or must not do in order to our being saved. And we are to look upon all his sayings as so many oracles of God, not only because he was sent from God to speak them, but because he himself too who spake them, was really and truly God ; so that everything that he spake was therefore the word of God, because he spake it : and therefore we must not think that so much as an idle or impertinent expression ever fell from him whilst he was upon earth ; but every thing that he said was of extraordinary weight, of absolute necessity to be known, observed, believed, and practised, by all those who would be saved from their sin and misery by his merit and mediation. And hence it was, that God of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, was pleased so to order it, that the divine sentences which proceeded from our Saviour's mouth should be left upon record for all future ages, not only by the testimony of them which were ear-witnesses of them, but by the infallible assistance of the Holy Ghost himself, inspiring of them ; by which means we are, or may be, as certain of what he said, as if we had heard it with our own ears ; and every thing that we read that he said, ought to have the same impressions upon us, when we read or hear it read, as if we had been just by him when he spake it, and had heard the words proceeding out of his sacred and divine mouth ; that so we may receive the same benefit from every thing he spake, as they did or ought to have done that heard it. And it is our unspeakable happiness, that though not every parti-

cular expression, yet the sum and substance of whatsoever he said is so faithfully transmitted to us, that we may all be thoroughly instructed in his whole will and pleasure, and easily understand what he would have us do in order to our partaking of the merits of his death and passions.

I have insisted the longer upon this discourse concerning the heavenly and divine sayings of our blessed Saviour in general, that you might be the better prepared to understand the words which I have now read unto you, and receive what I shall suggest unto you from them with that due attention and affection, as becometh those who believe them to be the words of their only Saviour and Redeemer, and part of that divine sermon which he preached upon the mount; wherein there is never an expression or word, but what deserves to be seriously considered and weighed by us; the scope of the whole sermon in general being to acquaint us with what is necessary for us to do, if we desire to go to heaven: for which end he tells us in express terms, ver. 17 *that he came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them*; that is, that notwithstanding he came with an intention to offer up himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind, and for the transgression of the moral law, yet he would not have them think that he came to abrogate and disannul that law, but rather to establish and confirm it; not to take off our obligations to it, but to make them stronger than they were before: and therefore he tells them, that the moral law is and shall be of perpetual force and virtue; so that not the least jot or tittle should ever perish, so as to be made void and of none effect, ver. 18. but the breakers of this law shall always have condign punishment laid upon them; and they that keep it, shall be graciously rewarded with eternal life, ver. 19. And then he adds, *For I say unto you, &c.* As if he should have said,

Do not think ever to come to heaven without performing sincere obedience to all the moral law; for whatsoever others may think or teach, I the Son of God *say unto you*, I that am come into the world on purpose to save you, I assure you, that for the great pretences which the Scribes and Pharisees make to righteousness, *unless your righteousness exceed theirs, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

In speaking to which words, that you may clearly understand the full meaning and intent of our blessed Saviour in them, I shall shew,

I. What righteousness in general is to be understood here.

II. What was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

III. Wherein ours should exceed theirs.

IV That *unless our righteousness doth exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

As for the first, what that righteousness in general is which our Saviour here speaks of; we must know that he is here treating of the moral law, and of that obedience which we ought to perform unto it. And therefore the righteousness which he here speaks of cannot be understood of that evangelical righteousness which we have in him; that which the apostle calls the *righteousness of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9 but of that righteousness which the moral law commands and requires of us: in which sense although we commonly use the word righteousness only to denote just and equitable dealings between man and man, yet, in Scripture, righteousness is a general term, whereby the Holy Ghost is pleased to express our whole duty both to God and man: so that every particular act which we are bound to do by the law of God, is but a branch or part of righteousness. And if we take the words in their fullest latitude, the very definition which civilians give of justice or

righteousness will bear this sense : they say, *Justitia est constans et perpetua voluntas jus suum cuique tribuendi* ; justice is a constant and perpetual will to give to every one their due. I know they restrain it only unto men ; but it may in the same sense be referred to God too : for whatsoever he commands us to perform immediately to himself, is really his due from us ; we owe it him, and unless we perform it, we wrong him, and detain from him that which he had an eternal right to and propriety in.

As for example, God hath commanded us to love and honour him, to fear and reverence, to praise and worship him : all which are but as so many acts of that homage which we owe him for his creation and preservation of us. And whosoever refuseth or neglects to pay them, he is therein unjust to God ; he doth not give him his due : but as the prophet saith, that the people *robbed God in tithes and offerings*, because they kept them back from him, and did not bring them to his priests and Levites, Mal. iii. 8. so may we be properly said to rob him too, by withholding our affections from him, by not giving him that honour and respect, that praise and worship, which is due unto his name : so that every act of impiety towards God is a kind of sacrilege ; and by consequence, the highest injustice imaginable, because it is committed against God himself.

And then, as for the duties which we owe to one another ; upon that very account because we owe them to one another, they cannot but all come under the proper notion of righteousness or justice : so that whatsoever we are bound to do, either to or for each other, that every man hath a right to ; and whosoever doth not do it, is as really unjust as he is that takes away any thing from him. As for example, we are all obliged by the law of God and nature to relieve such as are poor and indigent ; and therefore he that doth not do it, is not only uncharitable, but

unrighteous : for he wrongs the poor, by withholding that from him which God hath given him a right to. For the poor hath as much right to your alms, as you have to your estates ; alms being but as a rent-charge which God hath reserved for the poor out of the estates which he hath put into your hands. Hence the same word צדקת, which in Hebrew signifies *righteousness* ; in other oriental languages, especially Syriac and Arabic, it is commonly used for *alms* ; and the Hebrew word itself is ordinarily translated by the LXX. ἐλεημοσύνη, *almsgiving*, or *charity* ; and so it is plainly used, Dan. iv. 27 And thus I might instance in all other duties which we owe to our neighbours, which are therefore called duties because we owe them ; and you will all acknowledge him to be an unrighteous or unjust man, that doth not pay what he owes to all men. And therefore it is a great mistake to think that justice consists only in buying and selling, and paying the money which we owe to others, without defrauding or over-reaching them : for there are many other debts which we are obliged to pay to all men, as the apostle intimates, Rom. xiii. 7. And whosoever doth not perform his whole duty unto all men, in loving of them, in having a good opinion of them, in speaking well of them, in forgiving the injuries he receives from them, in being as helpful as he can in all things to them, and the like, is an unrighteous man, as well as he that cheateth or robs another of what he hath ; for he really robs his neighbour of what he hath a just right to, and propriety in, by the laws of God himself.

And thus we see how righteousness in its general notion comprehends under it all manner of grace and virtue whatever : in which sense the word δικαιοσύνη, which we here translate *righteousness*, was anciently used by the heathens themselves. Plato observeth, there are three parts of righteousness, in that it respects both God, men, and the dead, and so signifies

whatsoever duties we owe to any of them. Aristotle also frequently useth it in the same sense, and quotes for it that ancient verse made long before his days,

Ἐν δὲ δικαιοσύνῃ συλλήβδην πᾶς ἀρετὴ ἔσιν.

In justice or righteousness all virtue is contained.

And in this sense it is that our Saviour himself useth this word in my text, as denoting that habit of the mind whereby we are willing and ready to perform our whole duty both to God and man, and to carry ourselves towards both according to the moral law, so as to make that the rule and square of all our thoughts, words, and actions whatsoever; and that is properly righteousness.

The second thing to be considered is, what was that righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees which our blessed Saviour here speaks of.

First, as for the righteousness of the Scribes. We must know, that the Scribes were only an order or degree of men among the Jews, that gave themselves to the studying of the law, and so took upon them to write out, and to read the Scriptures of the Old Testament publicly, in the temple and in the synagogues; and to interpret and expound them to the people, to resolve all dubious questions about the law, and to answer objections made against it; and to preserve the genealogies of every tribe, especially of the royal family, and to give the true sense and meaning of any doubtful place either in the law or the prophets. Thus Shaphan the scribe is said to have read the law to King Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 9, 10. And *Ezra was a ready scribe in the law of Moses*, Ezra vii. 6, 10. In the New Testament there is frequent mention made of them. It was them, together with the chief priests, whom Herod consulted to *know where Christ should be born*, Matt. ii. 4. They told the people that *Elias must first come* before the Messiah, Matt. xvii. 10. They sat

together with the Pharisees in Moses's seat, Matt. xxiii. 10. and *taught the people*, Matt. vii. 21. So that it was by those that *Moses was preached in every city, and read in the synagogues every sabbath-day*, as the apostle speaketh, Acts xv. 21. Hence they being very conversant in the Scriptures, they were still had in a great esteem by the people : which that they might not only preserve but increase, they were so cunning and subtle as still to be finding out new notions to please the people with ; for which end, they were forced to lay aside the plain literal meaning of the Scriptures, as a thing much below them to mind, and to invent spiritual and mystical senses for every place of Scripture ; which at length swelled to that number, that by reason of their new and cabalistical interpretations, the word of God was so corrupted, and the true meaning of it so miserably perverted, that our Saviour himself tells them, *they had made it of none effect*, Matt. xv. 6. And herein it was that all the righteousness which they pretended to consisted, even in having the Scripture at their tongues' end, and being able to bring it in upon all occasions ; in understanding the high and mystical meaning of it, so as to be able to explain it unto others ; in performing outward obedience to the law, not according to the true and literal, but the new and mystical sense, which themselves had put upon it ; in frequenting the synagogues, and for a pretence making long prayers, Mark xii. 38, 39, 40. So that the Scribes were much like to those whom they call mystical divines in the popish religion, and to such among ourselves as turn the Scripture into allegories, and invent new notions and speculations in divinity, and so make a greater shew of piety, but neglect the power and substance of it.

Thus much of the Scribes. As for the Pharisees, we must know there were, in our Saviour's time, three principal sects among the Jews : the Essenes,

the Sadducees, and the Pharisees. Whereof, the Essenes are never, the Sadducees seldom, the Pharisees very often, mentioned in the New Testament, and reprov'd by our Saviour: not but that the others were as bad or worse than those, but because these were more numerous, and their errors were more specious and plausible than the others were: this being the strictest sect in all the Jewish religion, as St. Paul himself, who was brought up in it, testifieth, Acts xxvi. 4, 5. And therefore they were called Pharisees, from the Hebrew word פֶּרֶשׁ, *to separate*, because they separated themselves from other people, as being more pure and holy in their own esteem than they; as we may see by the Pharisee's prayer, when he said, *I thank thee, O God, that I am not as other people*, Luke xviii. 11. So that the word *Pharisee* properly signifies a separatist, one that separateth himself from the society and fellowship of others upon the account of religion, as pretending greater purity and holiness than others do. Hence this name properly belongs not only to many among ourselves, but likewise to very many in the popish religion, even to the monks and friars, yea, and nuns too: for there were women Pharisees as well as men, as I could easily shew, was it necessary or pertinent to my purpose. Hence the Jews to this day commonly call monks in Hebrew, פְּרוּשִׁים, *Pharisees*, and nuns, פְּרוּשׁוֹת, *she Pharisees*; yea, the very word *Monachus*, a monk, signifies much the same thing as *Pharisee* doth, even one that lives alone, separate from all commerce with other people. And the exposition which R. D. Kimchi gives of the word *Pharisee* plainly agrees with the temper of the monks, and their manner of life; for they were called *Pharisees*, saith he. because they made shew to the world, שֶׁתִּם פְּרוּשִׁים וְאַנְשִׁים צְדִיקִים, *that they are singular and separate persons, and righteous men*. And if we compare the one with the other, we shall easily

conclude that the Pharisees were just such persons in the Jewish as the monks are in the Christian religion, and so that they may properly be termed Pharisees. For the Pharisees pretended to follow a double law, the one written, and the other unwritten; the one which they received from Moses, the other by tradition from their forefathers, as Josephus, a Jew, tells us: and how exactly the friars agree with them in this, you all know. Yea, the Pharisees preferred their traditions before the written law, Matt. xv. 3. as you all know the Papists in general do at this time. The Pharisees had a different habit from other people, as the friars of the several orders now have. The Pharisees were very much noted for their running over a great many prayers each day, in the same manner as the Papists do their Ave-Mary's, and Pater-Noster's. The Pharisees preferred their vows before the works of justice and charity, Matt. xv. 4, 5. wherein they are exactly imitated by the friars and nuns. Moreover, had the Pharisees their phylacteries, or pieces of parchment with sentences of the law written in them, fastened to their foreheads and hands to preserve them, as they thought, from witchcraft and all evil? so have the friars pieces of wood, which they fancy to be parts of the cross, the Virgin's hair-lace, or some holy relics or other, which they carry about as amulets and preservatives against distempers, mischiefs, and dangers. Did the Pharisees, under a pretence of long prayers, devour widows' houses? so have the friars devoured the houses and estates too both of widows, and many others, under a pretence that they shall be prayed for a long while after they are dead. Were the Pharisees very zealous in getting proselytes? Matt. xxiii. 15. so are all the Papists in propagating their religion. Did the Pharisees adorn the sepulchres of the prophets? so do the Papists those of their saints. In a word, were the Pharisees more earnest for their

superstitious rites and ceremonies, than for the solid and substantial worship of Almighty God? It would be well if the monks and friars were not too much their apes in this particular. And thus I might shew how they who profess and call themselves the religious, in the Christian religion, exactly agree almost in every thing with those which our blessed Saviour here calleth Pharisees. From whence it is easy to observe what the righteousness of the Pharisees was, even a mere outward shew of piety and religion, a specious profession of righteousness, without the practice of it; or at the best, but an external observance of some things only, with the neglect, if not contempt, of others.

Thus we have considered the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees distinctly and apart. But we must further know, that in many things they agreed: not as if the Scribes were any part or sect of the Pharisees, as Baronius and others have falsely conjectured from Acts xxiii. 9. where mention is made of the Scribes which were of the Pharisees' part; for the meaning is not that the Scribes were any part of the Pharisees, but that some of the Scribes took part with the Pharisees, as it is plain they did; many of the Scribes espousing the same opinions, and being guilty of the same errors, as the Pharisees were. Hence they are often joined and condemned together by our blessed Saviour for their hypocrisy and deceit, Matt. xxiii. 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29. So in my text the Scribes and Pharisees are put together, as having only such a partial, external, and hypocritical righteousness, which can never bring a soul to heaven.

The next thing to be considered is, wherein *our righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.*

To understand which, we must know that the righteousness of the Scribes, and especially that of

the Pharisees, was in very great repute and esteem among the Jews ; so that St. Paul himself calleth it, *τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἵρεσιν θρησκείας*, the strictest sect of their religion, Acts xxvi. 5. and elsewhere, *ἀκριβείαν τοῦ πατρῷου νόμου*, the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, Acts xxii. 3. And the reason was, because the Pharisees were exceeding strict and precise in the scrupulous observation of all the outward rites and ceremonies which were either prescribed in the law, or received by tradition from their forefathers ; so that rather than do less, they would do a great deal more than was commanded them in the ceremonial law ; by which means they were thought, not only by themselves, but by others too, to be exceeding righteous, and to abound in the observance of the Mosaic law. But our Saviour was quite of another mind ; and tells us in plain terms, that although the Scribes and Pharisees seemed to be exceeding righteous, and were accounted so by others, yet unless our righteousness exceeds theirs, we shall never go to heaven. But heaven is a place which I am confident we all desire to go to ; and therefore it concerns us highly to understand wherein it is that our blessed Saviour would have us to be more righteous than the Scribes and Pharisees were, in order to our going thither. For, it seems, we must not only be righteous, but our righteousness must exceed the very exceeding righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ; otherwise, our Saviour himself tells us in plain terms, *that we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven*. And therefore, as it behoves me to be cautious in expressing, it behoves you to be as serious in considering, wherein you are to excel and exceed the Scribes and Pharisees, so as to be more just and righteous than they were ; which that you may all be, and so meet together again in heaven, I desire you to resolve beforehand to practise what I shall prove to be your duty and interest in this particular.

And do not fancy to yourselves that your coming hither to hear or learn how to be truly righteous, will make you so: but assure yourselves, the knowing what I shall tell you, without the doing of it, will be so far from advancing you to happiness, that it will but sink you deeper into misery and torment: insomuch that did I think you would not sincerely endeavour to be as righteous as I shall prove you ought to be, I should be loth to tell you of it. But why do I speak of that? It is God's command, and my duty to tell you of it; and therefore, whether you hear, or whether you forbear, be it known unto you, there are three things especially wherein *your righteousness ought to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*; in being internal as well as external, universal not partial, and sincere not hypocritical. In speaking to which, expect not any new notions, fine words, or quaint phrases from me; for it is a matter that concerns your everlasting salvation, and therefore in treating of it, you must give me leave to speak as plain and home unto all as possibly I can.

1. In the first place therefore, I say, *that your righteousness ought to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, in the internal as well as external performance of your whole duty both to God and man: I say, as well as external; because I would not have you think that your righteousness should be so altogether spiritual and internal, that you need not, or ought not, to make any external expression of it: for you having bodies as well as souls, both made by God, you are equally bound in both to worship and obey him that made them; yea, you are expressly commanded to *glorify God, both in your body, and in your spirits, because both are his*, 1 Cor. vi. 20. And therefore it is a fond and foolish thing to imagine, that because you are commanded in one place to worship God in spirit, therefore you

need not worship him in your bodies, when elsewhere you are plainly commanded to worship him in both. Wherefore supposing that you are not so ignorant of your duty and obligations to the great Creator of the world, as not to perform at least external worship and obedience to him, I must farther tell you, that this is not enough: this is no more than what the Scribes and Pharisees did; *they made clean the outside of the platter and the cup; but within they were full of extortion and excess*, Matt. xxiii. 25. whereas the inside and outside ought to have been both clean. *Thou blind Pharisee*, saith he, *cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also*, ver. 26. And because they were altogether for outside righteousness, hence it was that our Saviour denounced that dreadful woe against them, *Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so, saith he, ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity*, ver. 27, 28.

In this therefore it is that your righteousness ought to exceed theirs. They constantly prayed, went to their churches or synagogues, kept their sabbaths, heard the word of God, payed their tithes and offerings, gave much alms to the poor, and the like, as you may do; but their fault was, they did then, as the Papists now generally do, they looked only to the *opus operatum*, they minded no more than to do the work, it was no matter how; so the matter they performed was but good, they never regarded in what manner they performed it. And herein it is that your righteousness and obedience ought to excel theirs. You must not think it is enough to come to church to hear the prayers read, or a sermon preached, to give something now and then to the poor, and the like: if this was all that is required of

you, it would be easy enough to get to heaven, and none but fools and madmen would be shut out. But mistake not yourselves ; there is a great deal more than this required to the due performance of every duty that is required of you : for it is the heart which the all-seeing God, the searcher of hearts, principally observes in every act which you do perform ; and howsoever plausible your profession is, how specious soever your pretences to religion be, unless your hearts be united, and your whole souls employed in every act you undertake, you are no better than the Scribes and Pharisees, mere formal professors, outside Christians, and that is the best that can be said of you.

But to come still closer to you : you are all assembled at this time in the presence of Almighty God : you have been hearing very solemn prayers, together with the Scriptures, read, and something from the word of God preached to you : yea, some of you have this day received the consecrated bread and wine, the mystical body and blood of Christ. But let me tell you, never a soul of you hath done so much as one good work or righteous act this day, unless your hearts as well as bodies have been engaged and taken up in the performance of it. What, do ye think to pray with the tongue without the heart ; to hear with your ears without the heart ; to receive sacraments at the mouth without the heart ? No, it is impossible ; for there is nothing of goodness, nothing of righteousness in any thing you do, any farther than as it proceeds from your hearts ; so that you cannot be properly said to pray, unless your hearts be possessed at the same time with a due sense of God's greatness and glory ; and of your own wants, and unworthiness to have them supplied. You cannot be properly said to partake of the mystical body and blood of Christ, unless you receive it with humble, penitent, and believing hearts : you

cannot be properly said to hear the word of God, although you be now hearkening to it, unless your hearts and affections be moved suitably to what you hear; and unless you be resolved, by the blessing and assistance of Almighty God, to observe and practise it. The same may be said of all other duties whatsoever, whether they have relation to God or man: for you can never be properly said to perform your duty to either, any further than as your hearts and hands, yea, all the faculties of your souls and members of your bodies always go thither. And therefore, as ever you desire that your *righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, so as to be true righteousness indeed, you must be sure that your hearts as well as bodies be employed in the performance of it.

2. Your righteousness should exceed theirs likewise in the universality of it, in respect of the object as well as of the subject, so as to obey all the commands of God, as well as every one of them, with all your hearts: for herein it was that the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was so defective, even in being only partial: they did some things, but not all that was required of them: they were very precise and scrupulous in keeping the sabbath, in paying their tithes and offerings, in all the external rites of divine worship, and so in observing the duties of the first table: but as for those of the second, their duties to their neighbour, they regarded them no more than as if they were not at all concerned in them. This our blessed Saviour observed, both in the Scribes and Pharisees, and rebuked them sharply for it: *Woe, saith he, unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not leave the other done*, Matt. xxiii. 23. As if he should have

said, you ought to perform your duty, not only to God, but your neighbour too, and to your neighbour for God's sake : as you pretend to worship and obey God, you ought to be merciful, just, and faithful unto men. Where we may observe how he calls judgment, mercy, and faith, or fidelity, the weightier matters of the law, because without them, whatsoever else we do will stand us in no stead, these being the great and necessary duties which God requires of us to one another.

Herein therefore it is *that your righteousness ought to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, even in its extent and latitude, every way corresponding with the laws and commands of God : for this is the righteousness which God requires, even an universal conformity both of our will and actions, or our whole man, to those eternal rules of piety and justice, which are revealed to us in holy Scripture ; so that the foundation of it must be laid in true and universal piety towards God, which doth not consist only in praying, hearing, and the like ; but especially in loving and fearing, in worshipping and adoring, in honouring and serving the eternal God with a perfect heart and a willing mind. And howsoever exact and critical you may be in performing your duty unto God, it will avail you nothing unless you be likewise just and equitable, kind and merciful, loving and charitable to one another, yea, to your very enemies. Nay, more than that, you cannot be righteous to God, but you must of necessity be so to men too : for as you are his creatures, you owe universal obedience to all the laws of God ; and if you neglect any, you are unjust towards him. But you all know that justice and charity are commanded by God, as well as praying and hearing ; and therefore every act of injustice against your neighbour, is likewise an act of impiety towards God : so that true piety cannot possibly consist with envy, malice, hatred, fraud,

oppression, censoriousness, or with the wilful neglect of any duty whatsoever which we owe to one another: and therefore nothing can be more absurd and ridiculous, than to fancy yourselves to be good and righteous, holy and pious men, because you come to church and hear a sermon, and the like, upon the Lord's day; if in the mean while you make no conscience of cheating, backbiting, and wronging others. And so also on the other side, what if you pay every one their own? What though you live quietly and civilly with your neighbours? Yea, what though ye relieve the poor, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and the like? Are you therefore righteous? No, be not deceived; although these be great things in themselves, they are nothing by themselves; nothing unless they be accompanied with, and proceed from, an universal obedience to all the laws of God: for as we say of good and evil, *Malum fit ex quolibet defectu, bonum ex integris causis*, the same may be applied to righteous and unrighteous men. Though a man punctually observeth all the rest, and yet wilfully omits any one duty, either to God or man, he is upon that account an unrighteous man. Neither can any one be truly denominated righteous, but he that *hath respect unto all the commandments of God*, as David had, Psal. cxix. 6. which if any here present have not, as I fear there are too many, what do you do more than the Scribes and Pharisees? They were as precise and exact in many things, as any of you can be for your hearts. And yet for all that, your Saviour here tells you in plain terms, *that unless your righteousness exceed theirs, you can never enter into the kingdom of heaven*. And therefore, as ever you desire to come thither, you must be sure to do not only some, or many, or most of the things which are enjoined you, but all and every particular duty which you know yourselves to be obliged to perform either to God or man; otherwise you will

be no better than the Scribes and Pharisees, and so never likely to go to heaven.

3. Your righteousness should exceed theirs also in integrity and sincerity of heart : for this was one of the principal things wherein the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees failed, and came short of what it ought in truth to be ; even because though they did many things in themselves good, yet they did them for a bad end, to be seen of men, and so reputed and applauded as righteous by them, Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16. Hence our Saviour so often calls them hypocrites ; *Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites !* Matt. xxiii. 23. because they studied more to seem, than to be righteous ; and so in all they did, they aimed not at God's glory, but their own ; by which means all the religion which they so much boasted of, degenerated into base hypocrisy and deceit. And therefore, if we would be righteous and religious indeed, we must needs exceed them in this particular, so as to have no by-end or sinister designs in what we do ; not to pray, or fast, or perform any other religious act whatsoever, out of any such low and pitiful design, as to advance our temporal interest, or to get applause and credit among men ; but our only aim and design must be to *please and glorify God*, Matt. v. 16. and so to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. ii. 12. Or at least we must sincerely endeavour unto the utmost of our power to do it ; and then our righteousness, though it be not so much applauded by men, be sure it will be accepted of by God, through Jesus Christ our Lord : for this sincerity is indeed our evangelical perfection ; that which will be accepted by the Gospel in lieu of that absolute perfection which the law of God requires ; and by this it is that our *righteousness may not only exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, but we may all become really and truly righteous in ourselves, such as the Gospel

would have us to be in order to our being happy for ever.

Thus we see wherein our *righteousness ought to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*; in being internal, universal, and sincere. The last thing to be considered is, how it appears, *that unless our righteousness thus exceed theirs, we can never enter into the kingdom of heaven.* But this we need not stand long upon, it being so expressly asserted by Christ himself; and I hope there is none here present but will take his word for any thing, especially for what concerns your salvation, seeing it is by him only that you can be saved. But if you would know the reason why *your righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, in order to your going to heaven, in few terms it is only this: because it is necessary that you should be righteous, which it is plain that the Scribes and Pharisees were not: for if theirs had been true righteousness, yours needed not to exceed it. But the truth is, no man deserves the name of a righteous man, but he that exceeds the Scribes and Pharisees, in all the forementioned particulars: for he is truly righteous in nothing that is not sincerely righteous in all things; and he that is not truly righteous, you will all grant he can never go to heaven, as being a person not only unworthy, but incapable of those celestial joys.

Which being seriously considered, I hope I need not use any arguments to persuade you to exceed the Scribes and Pharisees in being truly righteous: for if your Saviour's own words will not prevail upon you, I am sure nothing that I can say will do it. Howsoever, give me leave in your Saviour's name to call upon you, to advise, exhort, and beseech you to labour after that righteousness which Christ in his Gospel requires of you; not such a righteousness as the Scribes and Pharisees had, not such a righteous-

ness as many among us so much pretend to, consisting only in the outward performance of some religious duties ; such a righteousness as this, you may be confident, will never carry you to heaven ; for Christ himself hath told you in plain terms it will not : and therefore it is quite another righteousness which you must endeavour after, even such a righteousness as consists in nothing less than in a sincere devotion of yourselves wholly to the service of Almighty God, and in the performance of universal obedience to all his laws and commands ; for nothing less than this will serve your turn. And do not say within yourselves that this is more than you can do : for there is never a one of you but as yet is in a capacity of attaining to it ; for if you do but as much as you are able, God is ready to enable you to do what otherwise you cannot, and for Christ's sake to accept of your sincere, instead of perfect righteousness. And therefore do but you do what you can, and I dare assure you no more will be required on your parts : but if you would but all do as much as every one is able, what holy, what righteous creatures would you soon become ? especially considering that the Almighty God himself is always at hand to assist your weak endeavours with his own grace and Spirit. And therefore let me beg of you to make no more vain excuses, nor halt any longer between two opinions. If you care not whether you go to heaven or no, what do you here ? If you do desire in good earnest to live with God and Christ for ever, and to partake of that glory which is prepared for the righteous in the world to come, why do not you endeavour to be such righteous persons, as that glory is prepared for ? What, do you think to go to heaven whether you be righteous or no ? Hath not Christ told you, you shall not ? And would you make him a liar, and his word void and of none effect ? No, mistake not yourselves ; whatso-

ever becomes of you, Christ's word must stand : so that if you be not truly, universally, and sincerely righteous here, you must of necessity be miserable hereafter ; there is no help for it : if you could have been saved without being righteous, he that came to save you would never have required it of you : but you see he hath and doth require it of you, yea, so as to assure you, that you can never go to heaven without it ; and therefore it is in vain for you ever to think of coming there, *except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.*

But methinks you should not stand out any longer against such plain and express words as these are of our blessed Lord himself : and therefore I hope you will not content yourselves any longer with the bare profession of that most excellent religion you are all of ; but are resolved by God's assistance to set upon the practice of whatsoever you know to be required in it ; which if you do, you will not only exceed the ancient but the modern Pharisees too, whether they be of the Protestant or Popish religion, so as to be both truly righteous here, and eternally blessed hereafter.

Which God grant that you may all be, through Jesus Christ our Lord, &c.

SERMON XCVII.

THE HOLINESS OF CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO BE CON-
SPICUOUS.

MATT. v. 16.

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see
your good works, and glorify your Father which is
in heaven.*

WHEN it pleased the only-begotten Son of God to come down in his own person to visit his creatures upon earth, and to converse with men in their own likeness, he found that all flesh was corrupt, and mankind in general addicted either to idolatry or superstition; for all the world then were either Jews or Gentiles: but the Gentiles, although they had some confused notions of a Deity, such as dim-sighted nature could direct them to; yet *when they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, but changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things*, Rom. i. 21, 23. Wherefore they being guilty of such gross idolatry in worshipping the creature more than the Creator, God blessed for evermore, God was justly pleased to give them up to uncleanness and vile affections, whereby their moral actions became as corrupt and bad as their righteous services; insomuch that although they still retained some common and natural distinctions betwixt good and evil, virtue and vice, among them;

yet it was very rare to find one so much as striving to square his life according to them, so as to choose the good and refuse the evil, to embrace virtue and eschew vice, according to the knowledge they had of them. And if any did chance to offer at something like to virtue and goodness, yet it was still attended with so many failures and imperfections, that there was nothing of real virtue and goodness in it.

And as for the Jews, although they had the law and the prophets to direct them both in their religious and civil actions, in the service of God, and behaviour to one another, yet came they very short of performing their duty to either; insomuch that the very Pharisees themselves, which were, as the apostle tells us, Acts xxvi. 5. *the strictest sect of all the Jewish religion*, they placed their religion only in external rites and ceremonies; as in frequent washing of themselves and vessels; in often fasting with sad countenances and disfigured faces; in long prayers and hypocritical giving of alms to be seen of men; in avoiding the company of such as themselves judged to be sinners; in paying the lesser tithes which the law required: and in the superstitious observation of all such things as they received by tradition from their forefathers, whereby they made the law of *none effect*, as Christ himself told them, Matt. xv. 6. Howsoever, by this means they were in great esteem among the people, being accounted the most devout and religious sect among them; notwithstanding they neglected the weightier matters of the law, as our Saviour himself told them to their faces, saying, *Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint, and annise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*, Matt. xxiii. 23.

When Christ therefore came into the world, find-

ing mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, so strangely corrupted and debauched both in their principles and practices, although his great design was to offer up himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for their sins, yet it was necessary also that he should instil into them better principles, and acquaint them more clearly with the nature of true religion ; without the practice whereof they would not be fitted nor qualified to partake of that happiness which he designed to purchase for them with his own blood. Hence therefore it was, that although his death would have been as meritorious for us as soon as he was born, as it was afterwards, yet he thought good to live about thirty years, as it were *incognito*, in the world ; and after that too, before he would die for us, he continued above three years conversing with all that had the happiness to enjoy his presence. All which time he spent in working all sorts of real miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine, and in instructing mankind more perfectly than they had been before instructed, in the principles of religion and morality ; how to serve God, and love one another better than they had done before. And intending now to introduce a new religion into the world, grounded upon clearer principles, and better promises than any before had been ; for this purpose he chose out several persons to be daily conversant with him, that so having his doctrine and discipline frequently inculcated into them, they might fully understand what he would have mankind both to believe and do, and so might faithfully transmit the same down to posterity, that all mankind might afterwards know how to come to heaven. To these persons therefore, in a more particular manner, and to all in general that would come unto him. he revealed and explained the whole mystery of godliness: assuring them all along that the strictest sect of all their religion, even the Pharisees themselves, how-

soever specious and plausible they seemed to others, yet they came very short of that which he required: *for, saith he, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. v. 20. Whereby he plainly acquainted them, that in order to their attaining everlasting happiness, it was absolutely necessary not only that they should be righteous, but that they should be more righteous than they were, which hitherto had seemed the most righteous of all among them. And therefore, he would not have them think, that because he came to die for their sins, he therefore came also to destroy the law and the prophets: *No, saith he, I came not to destroy, but to fulfil*, ver. 17. He came not to revoke the moral law, but to establish and enforce it with stronger arguments, and with greater obligations to obedience, than ever had been before. And therefore he would have all men know, that they who would be his disciples, so as to be saved by him, must outvie and excel all others, whether Jews or Gentiles, in all manner of righteousness both to God and men. And this is that which he assures us of in my text, saying, *Let your light, &c.*

In speaking to which words, I shall not discourage your attention with putting any superfluous glosses upon them, nor yet with forcing any impertinent observations from them; but in the same order wherein our Saviour spake them to his disciples, I shall endeavour so to explain them unto you, that you may all know the true intent and meaning of your Saviour in them; and for the future, I hope, order your lives and conversations accordingly.

First, saith he, *Let your light*: for the opening of which words, we must look back to ver. 14. where our Saviour saith to his disciples, *Ye are the light of the world*. But elsewhere he saith of himself, *I am the light of the world*, John viii. 12. And St. John

speaking of him saith, *This is the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, John i. 9. So that Christ and true Christians are equally termed *the lights of the world*, though in diverse respects: Christ is the sun, they the beams that are sent from him; he the fountain, they the streams that flow from that fountain of light; or he is light in and from himself, as theirs is borrowed or derived from him, as the light of the moon is from the sun; so that he giveth light from himself to them, they reflect it from him to others. Before the Sun of righteousness arose with healing in his wings, a spiritual darkness was spread over the face of the whole earth; but so soon as he appeared, he presently shined upon his disciples, first, enlightening them with true knowledge and understanding of the mysteries of salvation: and so they being first enlightened by him, were thereby enabled to enlighten others after the same manner. And hence it is that Christ, the true light, calls his disciples also *the light of the world*: whereby he intimated to them, how they should carry and behave themselves towards the rest of mankind: for nothing, you know, is more pure, nothing more piercing, nothing more acceptable, nothing more pleasant, nothing more advantageous, nothing more apparent, than light: according to all which qualities of light our Saviour would have his disciples to deport themselves in this world; forasmuch as they being sent to open the eyes of others, the eyes of others would be sure to be upon them; as our Saviour intimates in the following words, *A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid: neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel; but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house*, Matt. v. 14, 15. By which expressions he acquaints them, that now that he had endowed them with knowledge and grace as with light, they must not think to lie hid; but to be as a city upon

an hill, apparent to all that pass by, and as a candle which being lighted is not put under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that all may see it and receive light from it. And therefore he adds,

Let your light so shine before men; that is, the truth of that grace and faith which you have now received, and wherewith you are enlightened, let it not be obscured with the works of darkness, nor eclipsed by the interposition of earthly affections; but let it be so clear, so manifest, so perspicuous and apparent in your lives and conversations unto all men, *that they may see your good works*, that is, that all may clearly see how far you excel others in the performance of all your duties both to God and men: for that we are to understand by good works, not only works of charity, but whatsoever duties God requires of us, either to himself or others: all which are called good works, not as if they were perfectly good, in every circumstance and *punctilio* which the law requires, as the papists would have it, producing these words to prove that all the works of good men were always good works, only because they are called here by the name; whereas nothing can be more plain than that the very best men do many bad works which are contrary to the law, and that their best works come very short of it. And therefore they are here called good works only because the matter of them is good, and as to the manner they are as good as he that doth them can make them; who sincerely endeavours to form them to the law as near as he can; upon which account God for Christ's sake is pleased to accept of them as good works, yea, as our good works too; as our Saviour here intimates, saying, *that they may see your good works*: not as if they were or could be performed and made good by our own strength and power, as the Pelagians would gather from these words: whereas our Saviour here saith, *that they may see*

your good works, only in contradistinction to the good works of others ; and because they are produced both in us, and by us ; in us as the subject, and by us as the instrument ; but still by the grace of God as the principal efficient cause : as is plain from the last words, *that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*. From which words it is manifest, that all the glory of good works is to be ascribed only unto God, not to the men that do them : whereas, if they did them by their own strength, the glory would redound to them, and not to God.

But from these last words we may further observe, that God's glory should be the ultimate end of all our actions, according to that of the apostle, 1 Cor. x. 31. And therefore, when he commands *that our light so shine before men, that others may see our good works* ; we are not to end here, but to look further. For no man can do good works only to be seen of men ; for he that doth any works only to be seen of men, by that very means makes them to be bad works. For this our Saviour, in this very sermon, doth expressly forbid, Matt. vi. 1, 5. And in these very words, although he would have *our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works* ; yet he doth not say, that we are therefore to do them, that others may see them, and so make that one end of our actions ; but only that we are so to do them, that others may see them, and glorify God for them : so that his glory is to be not only the ultimate, but the only end of all our good works. And therefore our Saviour propounds this as the only end *why our light should shine before men*, even, *that they seeing our good works, might glorify our Father which is in heaven*, so as to give him thanks and praise for his assisting men in the doing of such good works, and to acknowledge the truth of that religion, wherein he is pleased to vouchsafe us such assistances.

The words being thus particularly explained, it is easy to discover the true meaning and intent of them ; which in general amounts to this, that they who embrace the Christian religion, and profess themselves to be Christ's disciples, should be eminent in good works, so as to excel the professors of all other religions ; that every one that sees and duly weighs a Christian life and conversation, might be thereby convinced of the excellency of his religion above all others : or, that all such as are converted to the Christian faith should be, as the apostle words it, *blameless and harmless, as the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, amongst whom they should shine as lights in the world*, Phil. ii. 15. This is to have *our light shine before men* indeed, when they can see what we are by what we do, and know us to be Christians by our being better than other men, and by our setting all others an example of true piety and virtue in our lives and conversations.

Now we being all in the number of those who profess themselves to be Christians, and by consequence are bound to be such excellent persons as these words import ; there are two things which we are all very highly concerned to understand, in order to our right observing what is here enjoined. The first is, wherein a Christian should excel all persons of other persuasions. And then, secondly, what reasons he hath to do so.

The first question, wherein a Christian should excel others, supposes that men of other religions, as Jews, Heathens, or Mahometans, may have some shadow or resemblance of virtue in them, and may do some things like to good works ; but that they that are of the Christian religion should excel them all in being and in doing good : and so that is not enough or sufficient for Christians that they be or live like other men ; but they must exceed not only

the vulgar sort of pretenders to virtue and morality, but the highest and exactest moralists too that ever lived without the pale of the church, howsoever eminent they have been in the esteem of men for any virtue or seeming goodness; and that in these three things especially, in the sincerity, universality, and constancy of good works.

The first thing wherein Christians ought to excel is sincerity; where by sincerity I mean that act or rather habit of the mind, whereby we do good works, not out of any ends or sinister designs, but out of pure obedience to the commands of God; so as not only to do what God commandeth, but therefore only to do it because God had commanded it; a thing which the heathens never dreamt of, or be sure were very defective in, forasmuch as they neither rightly believed in the true God, whose commands they were, nor knew them to be his commands; and by consequence, although they did the thing which was commanded by God, yet they could not be said to obey God's commandment, in that they did not reflect upon his authority in the doing of it, so as to do it upon that account because he was pleased to command it; wherein certainly the very essence of true obedience doth consist; insomuch that howsoever great and good our works may seem to men, they will not be so esteemed by God, neither are truly such in themselves, unless we do eye and respect God, and his commands, in the doing of them; without which brute beasts may do good works as well as men. As for example, you give an alms to the poor, you feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and the like; and it is a good work if you do it out of obedience to God; otherwise you do no more than the ravens did that fed Elijah: for their feeding of the prophet was certainly as good a work as to the matter of it, as your feeding of the poor can be. But I suppose you will all grant, that

there is more required of us that are rational creatures, in order to our doing good works, than what the fowls of the air can do ; and that we being endowed with reason, whereby we are capable of reflecting upon God himself, in doing what he commands, we are bound to do so ; or else we cannot be said to obey his commands.

Now this obedience to the commands of God being so absolutely necessary to the very essence and constitution of good works, hence we may plainly see the vast difference betwixt moral virtues and truly Christian graces ; the one aiming no higher than to do the thing that is good, the other no lower than to do it because it is good. Morality teacheth us no more than to do the thing that is commanded, Christianity no less than to do it because it is commanded. And that is no true Christian grace that acts from any other principle than this : neither can it be a good work that is done upon any other account. And hence it is that we justly assert the works which the papists do so much boast of, to be no good works ; forasmuch as they are performed not out of obedience to God, but from self-interest, even out of a design to merit something by them for themselves ; which overthrows the very foundation of good works, which can be built upon nothing but obedience unto God. And besides, it is a groundless, absurd, and ridiculous thing, to think that poor finite creatures should merit any thing by what they do, from Almighty God, from whom they receive whatsoever they have or are, and so the very power too by which they do it ; so that whatsoever good works we do, we are more beholden to God than he to us for our doing them, it being only by him that we are enabled to do them : and therefore, if we would live and act as Christians indeed, we must not have any such low and pitiful designs as these are in our observing the commands of God ; neither

must we content ourselves only with doing the thing that is commanded, but we must do it from a principle of true obedience to him that made and governs us and the whole world : by which means we shall not only excel all the professors of all other religions, but the greatest part of them too that profess themselves to be Christians.

And he that thus observes what God commands, merely because he commands it, he cannot but observe all the commands of God, there being the same reason for all the commandments as there is for one. This therefore is the next thing wherein a Christian should excel others, even in the universality of his obedience, observing not only one or two, not only many or most, but all the commands of God. *Then shall I not be ashamed, says David, when I have respect to all thy commandments.* As it is not enough to do what is commanded without having respect to the commandment, so neither is it enough to have respect to some, but it must be to all the commandments of God; even as Zacharias and Elizabeth are said to be *righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*, Luke i. 6. And indeed unless we thus walk in all, we walk in none of the commandments as we ought to do : *for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, he is guilty of all*, James ii. 10. And therefore as ever ye desire to obey the commands of God, ye must not pick and choose, take some part, and let the rest alone : no, you must observe either all or none. And by thus performing universal obedience to all the law of God, you will far exceed the strictest of all other religions ; who generally take up with some few particular duties instead of universal piety and obedience : as some of the heathens were eminent for justice, others for charity, some for contempt of the world, others for humility ; and so some were eminent for one, others for

other virtues; but we read of none that was eminent for all, or so much as endeavoured to be so. In this therefore we Christians ought to excel them, by being holy in all manner of conversation.

And that at all times too; which is the last thing wherein we ought to excel others, even in walking before the Lord, and serving him without fear *in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life*, Luke i. 74. And truly, as he that is not holy in all things is not holy at all, so he that is not holy at all times, is never holy as he ought to be; especially, unless he sincerely endeavours at least to keep his heart in an equal frame of piety and charity at one time as well as at another.

Thus therefore it is that our blessed Lord expects, yea commands, that you and I should, as we are Christians, excel all other men, in whatsoever is truly good and virtuous, as much as the light of the sun doth that of the planets, which are enlightened by it; especially, we should exceed all in the sincerity, universality, and constancy of our obedience to all the laws of God.

Having thus discovered how *our light should so shine before men, that others may see our good works*; or, wherein we who profess to believe in Christ should excel persons of all other persuasions whatsoever: we are now to consider what reasons there are for it; why Christians should be the best of men: a question necessary to be resolved in these days, wherein Christians themselves generally live as if they had no reason to be so good, much less to be better than others; as if Christ so died for their sins, that they might still live in them; or as if Christ had granted such indulgences and licences for sinning, as his pretended vicar at Rome doth; or howsoever, as if they were not obliged to obey the moral law, as other persons are. For if we seriously survey the lives of Christians now with an impartial eye, we

may with grief and sadness behold them so far generally from being better than others, that many others are better than them; the very Turks exceeding most Christians in their outward reverence and devotion towards God, in zeal for their religion, in charity to the poor, in faithfulness to their word, and uprightness in their dealings; yea, and the heathens themselves, who had nothing but the light of nature to guide them in their actions: how famous have many of them been in their generations for their justice and equity, for their temperance and sobriety, for their gratitude and liberality, for their freedom from luxury and passion, for their contempt of the world, and contentedness with their condition, and for their love and honour to virtue wheresoever they saw it; far beyond the generality of them that profess themselves to be Christians in these days; which is a shame to our religion, and a reproach to the Gospel of Christ; giving too much occasion to the enemies of Christ to blaspheme his sacred name, and to think that they might learn as much from the heathen oracles, or Turkish Alcoran, as from the Gospel itself; seeing that they that have the Gospel, and read it over and over again, and hear it constantly read and preached among them, are for the most part as much debauched in their principles and practices, as they that never heard of it; which is a sad thing to consider, and that which we can never sufficiently lament: especially, considering that for this God may justly take his Gospel from us, and give it to some nation that will improve it better than we have done; which, all things considered, we have just cause every moment to expect; especially, unless we make better use of it hereafter, than heretofore we have done: which that you and I may for the future do, I shall now endeavour to shew what extraordinary advantages we have by the Gospel for the refining and reforming of our lives and conver-

sation, and what invincible reasons there are why we who enjoy the Gospel should be better than all other persons that have it not, so as to exceed them far in all true virtue and godliness.

For first, we have clearer discoveries of God's will, and our duty, by the Gospel, than ever was before ; yea, as clear as possibly can be made unto us. The moral law, as it was at first written upon the tables of man's heart, was so defaced by the fall of our first parents, that by the light of reason we can scarce read any one command aright. And though the same law was afterwards transcribed into two tables of stone, that all might have it before their eyes, yet there also it was not so legible as it is in the Gospel ; as is plain from the strange misconstructions which the Jews had put upon it before our Saviour's time. But he now hath given us such clear interpretations of it, that he which runs may read it, and discern the full extent and latitude of it, there being nothing now of doubt or difficulty in it. And therefore our Saviour doth frequently compare his Gospel to light ; because by its means, we may so plainly see the things that belong to our everlasting peace, and understand our whole duty both to God and man : God himself having been pleased to come down in his own person, and explain it to us ; so that now we can have no excuse for indulging ourselves in any one sin whatsoever. And therefore Christ himself saith, *If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloke for their sin*, John xv. 22. implying that no man can now in reason expect to palliate and excuse his sin under pretence of ignorance, after that he himself hath so clearly discovered our duty to us. Hence also it is that he elsewhere saith, *that this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*, John iii. 19. As

if he should have said, although sin always deserveth death, yet now mankind deserves much more to be condemned to it; if notwithstanding that the light of the Gospel is risen upon them, they shall still continue in the works of darkness, and so sin against the light itself. This is the reason too that he pronounceth that dreadful woe against the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida, saying, *Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in thee, they had long ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes: but it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you,* Luke x. 13, 14. And what can you and I expect but that the same woe should be denounced against us, if notwithstanding that more than ordinary light of the Gospel which hath shined among us, we do not turn to God, and serve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind? Certainly, if we do not, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Turks and Heathens, at the day of judgment, than for us. And therefore we had need to have a care of ourselves. For now that God hath spoke unto us, not only by his prophets and apostles, but by his own Son too; and hath so clearly discovered unto us his will and pleasure concerning our behaviour to himself and others; he now expects that we faithfully perform it, otherwise the Gospel itself, the greatest of all mercies, will in one day rise up in judgment against us; and unless our lives be better than others in time, our condition will be worse than theirs to all eternity.

Especially considering, in the next place, that we have not only clearer discoveries of our duty, but a more perfect example and pattern of piety in the Gospel, than ever was before, or can be any where else. For there we have the life and actions of Christ himself recorded, *who did no sin, neither was*

guile found in his mouth, 1 Pet. ii. 23. yea, whose whole life was but as one continued act of perfect piety towards God, or else of charity towards men : for he always *went about doing good*, Acts x. 38. Indeed, there was nothing that he did, but what was perfectly good ; neither is there any grace or virtue whatsoever, but it appeared in him in its highest beauty and lustre. How humble was he in his carriage, how meek in his expressions, how faithful to his friends, how loving to his enemies, how fervent in prayer, how constant in preaching, how patient under his sufferings, how contented with whatsoever was laid upon him, how free from vice, how full of grace in every thing that he thought, or spake, or did ? In all which he left us *an example, that we should follow his steps*, 1 Pet. ii. 21. Yea, himself enjoins all those that would go after him so as to be his disciples, *to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow him*, Matt. xvi. 24. And elsewhere, *Learn of me*, saith he, *for I am meek and lowly*, Matt. xi. 29. From whence it is plain, that Christ expects that you that profess to believe in him, do come as near him as you can, in all your duties both to God and man ; and, by consequence, that having so exact a pattern of true grace and virtue before your eyes, you imitate it far better than it is possible for them to do which never heard of it.

In the third place, we have by the Gospel the promises of greater assistances, such as never had been before. Indeed, the great end of the Gospel, and of our Saviour's coming into the world, was to be our Saviour, to save us from our sins, both from the guilt and strength of sin. The first he did by making satisfaction for us, by dying in our steads, and so suffering that in our natures, which otherwise we must have suffered in our own persons. The other he hath done by procuring such assistances for us, whereby we may be enabled sincerely to per-

form whatsoever is required of us. And that this was one great end of Christ's both incarnation and passion, is plain, in that the apostle tells us, that he was sent on purpose to *bless us, by turning every one of us from our iniquities*, Acts iii. 26. And elsewhere it is said, *that he gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, Tit. ii. 14. And many such-like places there are, which plainly shew that though it was not all, yet it was a great part of Christ's design in coming into the world to make us holy; without which indeed, the pardon of our sins, which he purchased by his death, would avail us nothing, holiness being indispensably required to the qualifying us for the enjoyment of real and eternal happiness; and therefore, notwithstanding the pardon of our sins, we should be altogether incapable of the joys of heaven, unless our hearts be renewed, and our souls inclined to the living God; which can only be done by the assistance of the Holy Ghost: and therefore our Saviour tells us, *that except a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, John iii. 5. But it is only by Christ our Saviour that we can partake of the graces and influences of the holy Spirit: *not by the works of the law which we have done*, said the apostle, *but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour*, Tit. iii. 5, 6. And hence it was that the Spirit was not given in so visible a manner until Christ was ascended; but immediately before his ascension he told his disciples, *that he would send the promise of his Father upon them*, Luke xxiv. 49. Which was plainly nothing else but the Holy Ghost, which was before promised, and now fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And therefore, whosoever would believe in Christ aright,

must depend upon him not only for pardon, but likewise for the assistance of his grace and Spirit, for the mortifying of his lusts, and making him truly holy. And verily, the promises of the Gospel are so full and clear to this purpose, that it is nothing but the extreme neglect of ourselves, and the very height of obstinacy, that can keep us from partaking of them. For if you be but truly sensible of your sins, and desire to be cleansed from them, and sincerely endeavour to do what you can yourselves, and believe in Christ, or trust on him to enable you to do what yourselves cannot; I say, if you do but do this, which none of you but may easily do, you cannot miss of receiving such supplies of grace, whereby your strong sins shall not only be subdued, but your dark mind so enlightened, your erroneous judgments so informed, your perverse wills so rectified, your inordinate affections so regulated, your hard hearts so softened, your proud spirits so humbled, your sleepy consciences so awakened, and your whole souls so renewed and sanctified, as to be truly wholly in all manner of conversation. For God never yet did, nor never will fail any man that sincerely endeavoured to do what he could to serve him, and trusted in him for his assistance in doing what otherwise he could not. And therefore there is all the reason in the world that we, who have such promises and overtures of grace and assistance made unto us by God himself, by which if we be not failing to ourselves we may be enabled from above to perform good works, and exercise all true grace and virtue; all the reason in the world, I say, that we should far exceed all other persons who have nothing but their own natural strength and power to act by, in serving and obeying God, and in doing whatsoever he hath been pleased to require of us.

Especially seeing, in the fourth place, that we in the Gospel have the greatest assurances of accept-

ance before God. Whatsoever endeavour any others make after piety and virtue, they have no assurance, nor any grounds to believe that the supreme Being of the world will accept of their faint endeavours instead of real duties, or of their sincerity, if they had any, instead of perfection : or rather they had just cause to suspect and believe the contrary, even that whatsoever they did, and how sincere soever they were in doing of it, yet it coming infinitely short of what infinite justice required, it could never be accepted of by God. But we know and are assured, that if we do but sincerely endeavour unto the utmost of our power to adjust our actions unto the law of God, although at the best they come very short of it, yet in and through Jesus, both our persons and performances shall be accepted by him : for this is most clearly held forth to us in the whole tenure and œconomy of the Gospel, which also is confirmed to us by so many and such real miracles, that there is no place left for doubting and unbelief; but we have stronger grounds to be assured of it, than we have to believe any thing we see or hear ; the eternal God himself having not only infallibly attested it, but confirmed that his infallible testimony by such miracles as exceed the greatest demonstrations in the world, especially by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, whereby, as the apostle argues, Acts xvii. 31. *he hath given assurance unto all men*, that Christ is ordained to judge the world in righteousness ; and, by consequence, that whatsoever is asserted by or concerning him in the Gospel, is infallibly true ; and so that if we believe in him, our former sins shall not only be pardoned, but our future duties shall be accepted by God, if they be sincerely performed, notwithstanding the manifold failures and imperfections there may be in them ; which is the highest obligation imaginable for us to use the utmost of our power and skill, in the per-

forming all virtuous and good actions that we can, seeing we are so much assured, that though they be not absolutely good in themselves, yet God will accept of them as such in Jesus Christ; which consideration, methinks, should have that power upon us, as to force us all into stedfast resolutions, by the assistance of God's grace and Spirit, to leave no stone unturned, to neglect no grace, and omit no duty that is required of us, as knowing that God in Christ will be well pleased with it, and with us too for doing it; which should make us think scorn to be overtopped by those to whom the Gospel is not so clearly revealed, and purpose for the future to surpass and exceed them all in good and pious works.

And that which adds weight and force to all the foregoing reasons is, that, in the last place, we have so great an assurance in the Gospel, not only of our present acceptance, but future happiness, in case we practise what the Gospel requires of us. The heathens by the light of nature could discern but very little of a future life, and therefore were forced to resolve all the reward of virtue into virtue itself, making the satisfaction which arises from the exercise of it a sufficient recompence for our endeavours after it. The Mahometans speak much of the world to come under the name of paradise; but placing all the happiness which is there to be expected only in sensual pleasures and delights, they thereby make no real happiness at all, as being no greater than what brute beasts may partake of as well as we. The Jews indeed had some intimations of an eternal happiness as the consequent of true holiness in this life; but it was represented to them for the most part in such obscure types, and intermingled with so many temporal promises, that they generally had but very dark and doubtful apprehensions of it; in-somuch that many of them, to wit, the Sadducees, utterly denied both the existence of spirits and re-

urrection of the dead, and by consequence the existence of the soul too in the other world, and the resurrection of the body to eternal life. But now, *by the Gospel*, as the apostle saith, *our Saviour Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light*, 1 Tim. i. 10. that is, he hath now given us in the Gospel such clear and infallible assurances of an eternal life and happiness attending those who repent and believe his Gospel, that none can believe the Gospel, and yet deny that which is so plainly asserted in it. And if we seriously consider the nature and excellency of that happiness which the Gospel assures us God will graciously bestow upon them that love and obey him, we must needs acknowledge it to be the highest encouragement imaginable to all manner of virtue and good works: for certainly that happiness which the Gospel proposeth to them that obey it, is the highest that is possible for a creature to be made capable of; so great, that I am altogether as unable to express, as I am desirous to enjoy it, as consisting in nothing less than in the clear vision and perfect fruition of the infinite God, the chiefest good himself: the consideration whereof should make us all, methinks, throw away the thoughts of all things else, and trouble ourselves about nothing but how to get to heaven, and by consequence how to walk in that narrow path which leads unto it, and never think we can do enough for that, which is not only infinitely more than we can deserve, but infinitely greater too than we are able to conceive. It is an astonishing mercy, that the most high God should ever accept, by any means, of what we poor sinful mortals do; but that he should recompense our transient, weak, and faint performances, with nothing less than a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, this is such an inducement and encouragement to universal obedience, that we may justly suspect ourselves to be

distracted in our minds, as well as corrupt in our affections, unless it prevail upon us to devote ourselves wholly unto the service of the living God, and to the obedience of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; as knowing that unless we do it, we shall not only be deprived of this transcendent happiness, but condemned too to the greatest misery that our natures can possibly be capable of; whereas on the other side, if we do it, we shall as certainly not only be freed from that transcendent misery, but be instated also in the greatest happiness that our souls can possibly be invested with. And therefore I may conclude this with the words of the apostle, *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord,* 1 Cor. xv. 53.

Thus I have shewn now what reasons you and I, who profess ourselves to be Christians, have to be eminent for good works, so as to excel all of other religions in true piety and virtue; in that we have clearer discoveries of God's will and our own duty, a more perfect example and pattern how to do it, promises of greater assistance from God himself to do it, and stronger assurances not only of acceptance of what we do in this life, but likewise of an eternal recompence of reward in the life to come. And need I now use any more arguments to persuade you to endeavour at least to be eminent in all true grace and virtue? Will it not be superfluous, after so many reasons as have been produced for it? Verily, one would think it would be so; and I desire to hope the best of you all, and that you will not content yourselves with the bare profession of that excellent and only true religion which you are of, nor yet with the practice of some few particular duties required in it; but that you will now use the utmost of your power and skill to be

such as your religion commands you should be, even far exceeding men of other persuasions ; that every one may see what religion you are of, by your being and living better than other men. And, O that this might be the happy issue of this discourse, and of your coming hither at this time ! Even that from this day forward you would all strive and contend about nothing else but which should live the most like Christians, and which should most excel others in an universal obedience both to the Law and Gospel ; that all here present might for the future shine as so many lights in the world. And let me tell you, this would be the way to shame both Jews and infidels into the embracement of the Christian religion. This would be the way too to convince papists, heretics, and schismatics of their errors, when they shall see you that are sound in the faith outstripping and excelling them in your lives and conversation : all the arguments in the world would not prevail so much upon them as this one : and therefore, if you have any love either for your religion or your own souls, halt no longer between two opinions ; but if you be Christians, manifest yourselves to be so by your eminency in good works, excelling all others in your love to God's person, in your obedience to his precepts, in your fear of his threatenings, in your trusting on his promises, in your faith in his Son, in your loyalty to your sovereign, in your patience under your sufferings, in your contempt of the world, in your faithfulness to your friends, in your love to your enemies, in your constancy in praying, in your seriousness in hearing, in your frequenting the sacrament, in your justice in your dealing, in your charity to the poor, in your lowliness in your own eyes, and in all other whether Christian graces or moral virtues whatsoever : for this is that which Christ expects and commands from you all, saying, *Let your light so shine, &c.*

SERMON XCVIII.

THE WISDOM OF BEING HOLY.

PSAL. cxi. 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

AS nothing is more ridiculous in itself, nor more odious and detestable both to God and man, than hypocrisy, or counterfeit religion; so neither is there any thing more excellent in itself, more acceptable to God, nor more advantageous to mankind, than real and true piety; which is therefore commended to us in holy Scripture, under the name and notion of whatsoever we can desire to make us happy or do us good. Are we covetous of riches? The apostle tells us, that *godliness with contentment is great gain*, 1 Tim. vi. 6. yea, that *godliness is profitable for all things*, ch. iv. 6. which I am sure nothing in the world besides is. Are we ambitious of honours? The truly pious are certainly invested with the highest honours that it is possible for a creature to attain unto: for he is honoured by God himself, the fountain of all true honour, 1 Sam. ii. 30. and therefore *the righteous* is said to be *more excellent than his neighbour*, Prov. xii. 26. Are we desirous of pleasure and delight? The *ways of wisdom or true piety, are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 17 yea, *length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches*

and honour, ver. 16. Neither is there any thing that is or can be the object of our soul's desire, but it is either contained in, or may be obtained by, true piety and religion.

But notwithstanding, seeing the wealth and honours, the life and pleasures, and all the good things else which attend on godliness, are of another and higher nature than the things that go under those names among the men of this world ; so that none can attain unto them without neglecting, or at least despising all things upon earth ; hence piety itself is apt to be branded with the ignominious name of folly ; and those who are truly religious, are commonly reputed little better than fools and idiots, because, forsooth, their minds being always fixed upon higher objects, they cannot bring them down so low as to be always employed about the toys and trifles of this transient world ; so that they let slip many opportunities of getting or increasing their estates, because they will not use such unlawful means as others do about it. They cannot be so plausible in flattering, so subtile in projecting, so cunning in equivocating, so confident in lying, so ingenious in cheating, so artificial in cozening, as others are, and therefore they are thought to want the wit wherewith others are endowed by nature, or have acquired by art.

But if we consult the judgment of those which are truly wise, or search into the oracles of the all-wise God himself, we shall soon find the contrary ; even that the wicked and impious, howsoever cunning and witty they may seem, are really the greatest fools and madmen upon earth ; and the truly pious or godly, howsoever simple and ignorant they appear, are really the wisest and most knowing persons in the world ; which were you but thoroughly convinced of, it would set an extraordinary edge upon your desires after holiness : for I dare say, you would all willingly be, and shew yourselves to be,

wise men, this being a matter of real esteem, and great reputation in the world. But if it be impossible for you to attain to true wisdom, until you first attain to true piety, you must needs follow after holiness, in order to the accomplishment of your desires to be wise. This therefore is that which I shall endeavour at this time to prove; and for that end have chosen these words, from whence to demonstrate to you, that sin is indeed the greatest folly that we can be guilty of, and holiness the highest wisdom that we can ever attain unto; *The fear of the Lord*, saith the Psalmist, *is the beginning of wisdom : a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.*

For the opening of which words, we must first consider what we are to understand here by *the fear of the Lord* : for the understanding whereof,

First, we must know that the eternal God, as he is the supreme Being and Governor of the world, is the only object of our fear : for though other irascible affections be placed only upon evil, this of fear is to be placed only upon the chiefest good ; not because he hath any thing of evil in him, but because he is above all evil ; for that I am to fear most, from which I may receive the greatest good, and which by consequence can withhold the greatest good from me, and lay the greatest evil upon me : now sin, that is the worst of evils, can do us no hurt unless God pleaseth, who is so infinitely good, that he would not suffer sin to be, but that he is so infinitely powerful that he can produce good from it : it is only for sin indeed, but it is only by God that we can be destroyed ; and if sin may not, certainly nothing else ought to be feared in comparison of God ; no, not the devil himself, who can do no more without God's permission, than the weakest creature in the world : his hands are tied, his power restrained, his bounds are set and limited by Omnipotence it-

self: he could not touch Job's cattle till he had received permission from God; neither could he come near his body, till his commission was both renewed and enlarged: so neither he nor any other creature in the world can bring us into the least evil, without the commission, or at least the permission, of the chiefest good, our Creator: they may oppress us, they may reproach us, they may wound us, they may kill us; but they cannot hurt us without God, who can turn all seeming goods into real evils, and all such seeming evils into real goods. Hence our Saviour enjoins us *not to fear them which can kill the body, but him who can destroy both soul and body in hell*, Matt. x. 28. Others may kill our bodies, but they cannot kill our souls; and though they may kill our bodies, they cannot destroy them, for God can raise them up again. But if God himself sets himself against us, it is not in the power of all the creatures in the world to relieve or help us: so that, as the apostle saith, *it is a fearful thing indeed to fall into the hands of the living God*, Heb. x. 31. He doth not say, it is a fearful thing to fall into poverty; it is a fearful thing to fall into disgrace; it is a fearful thing to fall into sickness; it is a fearful thing to fall into the jaws of death, or into the hands of cruel men; but, *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. It is true, it may seem a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a righteous judge, an angry king, or a tyrannizing devil; but woe be to him that falls into the hands of the living God, from whom no creature is able to rescue or deliver him: so that we have so much cause to fear God, that we have cause to fear nothing in the world but him, nothing being able to remove any evil from us, or to confer any good upon us, nothing able to lay any evil upon us, or withhold any good from us, but only he; who should therefore be not only the

chiefest but the only object of our fear, so as to fear and dread no person or thing in the world but him. So Isa. viii. 13.

Now this our fear of God we ought to express by having high and reverential apprehensions of him, of his greatness, power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy, and all his incomprehensible perfections, which we are still to be thinking of, so as to admire, reverence, and adore them, so as never to take his sacred name into our lips, without lifting up our hearts unto him; much more when we speak unto him, we must not dare to utter any thing unseemly or irreverently before him, but still follow the apostle's rule, to *serve him with reverence and godly fear*, Heb. xii. 28. Yea, our fear of God should be, and if it be real will be, expressed by our care to avoid whatsoever is displeasing to him, and to perform whatsoever is commanded or enjoined by him; otherwise we in vain pretend to fear God.

Hence therefore the *fear of God* is ordinarily put in Scripture for the sum and substance of true religion and sincere piety; the fear of God and godliness being equivalent terms, both signifying one and the same thing. Thus Job is said to be *an upright man, one that feared God*, Job i. 8. He that fears God must needs be an upright man; and none can be an upright man that doth not fear God. Thus, Psal. xxxiv. 11. Prov. xv. 16. and so all along, especially in the Old Testament, the fear of the Lord is put for all the worship and service which we owe to God, for the whole duty of man: and therefore, in the New Testament, where the Greek useth εὐσεβεία, *godliness*, the Syriac always renders it by ܐܬܝܬܐܢܐ *the fear of God*; as where we read, *having a form of godliness*, in the language which our Saviour spake it is rendered by ܐܬܝܬܐܢܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ *who have a form of the fear of God*, that is, *of godliness*.

And the reason why the fear of God is thus used to express universal holiness or piety is, because no acts of piety can be performed without it; for we are to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*, 1 Cor. vii. 1. Neither are there any acts of piety but what proceed from it: for *by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil*, Prov. xvi. 6. yea, *the fear of the Lord is to hate evil*, Prov. viii. 13. it being impossible for a man to fear God and love sin at the same time: so that didst thou fear the great God as thou oughtest to do, thou couldest not but reverence his presence, and dread his power; thou couldest not but admire his wisdom, and love his beauty; thou couldest not but be fearful of his judgments, and thankful for his mercies; thou couldest not but tremble at his threatenings, and trust on his promises; thou couldest not but avoid whatsoever he hath forbidden, and perform whatsoever he hath commanded; thou couldest not but serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind, so as never to depart from him: *I will put my fear*, saith he, *into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*, Jer. xxxii. 40. The true fear of God settles and fixes our minds so, that neither the allurements of the world can draw us, nor the temptations of Satan can drive us from him; and therefore it is no wonder that true piety in general is signified by our fearing God.

In the next place, this *fear of God* or true holiness, that is, the universal conformity of our natures, will, and actions, to the commands of the most high God, is here said to be *the beginning of wisdom*, ראשית חכמה, *the beginning*, and the *head*, or *perfection of wisdom*; for the word ראשית signifies both: so that the meaning of the words in general is, that true piety is both the beginning and end, the inchoation and the perfection of wisdom; or, as St. Chrysostom expounds it, is, πηγὴ, ῥίζα, ὑπόθεσις, *the fountain, the root, the ground, the all of wisdom*. So that he who fears God is a wise man; yea he is there-

fore a wise man, because he fears God : and he who fears not God, is a fool ; therefore a fool, because he doth not fear God.

The first thing therefore I would have you to observe from these words is, that he that doth not fear God, but still continues in his sins, hath not as yet attained so far as to the beginning, the very lowest degree of wisdom ; he hath not so much as begun to be wise, and by consequence is a very fool : he may justly be called a Nabal, for folly is with him, because sin is with him ; which, all things considered, is the greatest folly that a man can possibly be guilty of.

In speaking to which, it would be an endless thing to reckon up the many places of Scripture wherein sinners are called fools, yea and madmen too. A notable example of it we have in the parable of the prodigal, who having spent all his time and wealth and rioting, drunkenness, and such like sins, our blessed Saviour saith, *When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough?* Luke xv. 17. When he came to himself : it seems the man had hitherto been besides himself, perfectly distracted, and broken in his intellectuals : but when he bethought himself of going to his father, then he began to come to himself, to be recovered from his former folly, madness, and distraction. Now by the prodigal our Saviour there means all manner of persons who continue in their sins, and will not return to God ; and by his coming to himself, he means his return or conversion unto God : so that so long as any of you refuse to fear God and keep his commandments, and choose to feed upon husks with the swine of this world, rather than upon the bread of life, with the angels and saints ; whatsoever thoughts you may have of your wisdom and sobriety, in the judgment of our blessed Saviour himself, you are no better than distracted

persons, beside yourselves; neither can you come to yourselves but by returning unto God: which observation, rightly considered, cannot surely but be very prevalent upon you, to shame you out of your sins, into the fear and love of God: and therefore I shall endeavour to explain and confirm it farther to you, shewing you both the *εἶς* and the *διότι* of it, that sinners are really fools, and why they are so, and wherein especially they manifest themselves to be so.

First therefore, that every sinner is a fool, and, by consequence, that yourselves are fools so long as sinners, you cannot but grant and acknowledge, if you do but consider these things, which are clear demonstrations of this great truth, that every sinner is a fool.

1st, You know a fool by his dullness, stupidity, and ignorance of what is necessary for him to know. The wisest man in the world doth not know all things, and the greatest fool in the world may know some things; and therefore folly doth not consist so much in being altogether ignorant, but in being ignorant of such things, the knowledge whereof is necessary to make men happy. A natural fool may know how to pursue a cloud, and to play with feathers, and yet be a fool for all that; and so may a spiritual fool too, he may know how to catch at a bubble, and gape after air, I mean, he may know how to humour the world, and get riches: but what of all that? he knows nothing of God, nothing of Christ, nothing of true grace and virtue, and so nothing that is necessary for him to know. He may have some dark and confused notions of such spiritual things, as the veriest fool in the world may have of temporal; but he knows nothing clearly, nothing distinctly, nothing experimentally, nothing practically, as he ought to know it. A fool, or madman, may and ordinarily doth conceit himself to be very

wise, and knowing more than others ; but his conceits of himself cannot make others believe so, if his actions declare the contrary. So you may fancy to yourselves that you have attained to the great knowledge of God ; but you may fancy to yourselves what you please, if you do not fear God, I am sure you do not know him ; for it is absolutely impossible to know so great and glorious, so wise and powerful, so just and terrible a God as he is, and not to fear and dread him. As David saith, *they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee*, Psal. ix. 10. so we may say of all other duties whatsoever, they that know God, they cannot but love and honour him, they cannot but serve and worship him, they cannot but obey and fear him, and, by consequence, they cannot but repent and turn unto him : and therefore so long as you continue in your sins, you may conclude yourselves to be ignorant of God, and so of all things that conduce either to your present or future happiness, and consequently, that you are very fools.

2dly, That every sinner is a fool, is plain, in that as he knows nothing, so he can do nothing as he ought to do it. You will all grant him to be a fool with a witness, who is not capable of any art or employment that is necessary for his livelihood and preservation : just such a fool is every sinner ; he knows not how to set his hand to any spiritual work or employment whatsoever ; he knows not how to pray or hear, to meditate or examine himself. As a fool can talk to himself, so may such a one mutter out some words to himself, but he knows not how to pray to God. I do not deny but you may be cunning enough at sinning, so as to do it very artificially ; even as there is never a fool in the world but hath wit enough to play the fool, so there is never a sinner but may know well enough how to act the sinner : but if he sets about any thing that

is good, he does it so simply and awkwardly, that he betrays his folly in the doing of it ; not being able either to begin, carry on, or finish it as he should do ; and therefore for all his subtlety in other things he is a fool in the esteem of God himself, Jer. iv. 22.

3dly, You know a fool by his setting a high price upon things of a low value, and a low value upon things of the highest price. As he is a fool indeed, you will say, that thinks a bead better than a pearl, and prefers a cockle-shell before a crown ; such a fool is every sinner. Poor fool ! he prizes a little refined earth before the pearl of price, a little gold and silver before eternal glory ; the onions and garlick of Egypt are better to him than all the milk and honey in the land of Canaan. And I fear there are too many such fools among us, who prefer the toys and trifles of this lower world, before the joys and happiness that is above ; who prefers their bodies before their souls ; their sins before God ; the worst of evils before the best of goods ; earth, with all its miseries, before heaven with all its bliss and glory. O desperate madness ! Egregious folly ! What a strange, sottish, foolish creature is man become ! That we who are designed for, and are invited to, nothing less than the enjoyment of God himself, should generally spend our time, our thoughts, our parts, our whole life and strength in minding and pursuing nothing else but dreams and shadows, even worldly pelf and honours, which have no other worth but what the delusions of our own distracted fancies confer upon them !

4thly, It is plain also that every sinner is a fool, in that he makes such simple and mad bargains ; which naturally follows from the former. You will all acknowledge him to be an egregious fool indeed, that he will sell an estate for a feather, and part with a crown to purchase a pebble : I know you will

all grant such a man deserves to be begged for a fool. And yet whosoever thou art that continuest in thy sins, thou art the man : thou art such a fool as this is ; for, Esau like, thou sellest thy birth-right for a mess of pottage, a whole kingdom for a little piece of land, God for the world, heaven for earth, all things for nothing ; for nothing, did I say ? yea for less than nothing, for worse than nothing, for sin and misery. Instead of selling the world to gain thy soul, thou sellest thy soul to gain the world ; and so dost not only sell heaven for earth, but for hell too into the bargain, and so partest with the height of happiness for the depth of misery, with everlasting bliss for eternal torments. And worse than all this too, men do not only make such foolish and ridiculous bargains as these are, but they are apt to applaud their own ingenuity in it, and to think they get a great deal by it ; which is a clear demonstration that they are very much distempered in their brains, and have lost the true use of their sense and reason.

Lastly, A fool, you know, cannot betray his folly more than by being secure in the midst of danger, so as never to look before him, nor matter any evil that is falling upon him. Yet this is the plain case of every sinner ; who though he stands continually upon the brink of hell, and wants nothing but God's push to throw him in, yet he is so fool-hardy, as we use to say, that he fears nothing, but thinks himself secure and safe enough. Thus the rich man in the Gospel, when his barns were full of corn, his heart was at ease, and his head unconcerned, for any thing that could befall him ; so that he sang that pleasing *requiem* to his soul, *Soul, take thy ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years* : but you know what he was called for his pains, in plain terms, a fool ; *Thou fool*, saith God, *this night shall thy soul be taken from thee*, Luke xii. 20. How many such

fools have we among us, who, continuing in their sins, are every moment subject to the wrath of this eternal God, and in continual danger of hell-fire, and yet can sleep as quietly, and live as merrily, and go on as securely in the ways of sin, as free from all cares and fears, as if they had never heard of any such thing as death and judgment? And if these be not, I am sure there neither are, nor can be, any such creatures in the world as fools or madmen.

That sin therefore is the greatest folly, and every sinner, as such, a very fool, these things being considered, none can deny without betraying his own folly and want of reason.

The next thing to be considered is the *διότι*, how it comes to pass that men which were first made in the likeness of God, and so endowed with reason, wisdom, and a clear understanding of all things necessary to make them happy, that they should become such fools, so destitute of all true wisdom and knowledge, and guilty of such egregious folly, in spiritual matters, which do so highly concern them. To which we may answer in brief, some are spiritual fools, for the same reason that others are natural fools: for why are any natural fools, but only because their brains are distempered and out of order; by which means their fancies or imaginations being disturbed, they have dark, false, and confused notions and conceptions of things. And upon the same account it is, that all sinners are spiritual fools; because their souls are distempered, their intellects distracted, their consciences corrupted, their reason darkened, their wills perverted, their hearts hardened, their affections disordered, all their faculties are out of tune, and so act irregularly, and contrary to their first institution: for when man by sin and disobedience fell from God his Maker, he fell as far as from heaven to earth, from the height of

piety and happiness, to the depth of sin and misery ; and, by consequence, his fall was so great, that it turned his brains quite upside down, and so he remains in a distracted condition, and never can come to himself again, till the great God himself becomes his physician, and undertakes his cure ; and, by the infusion of his grace and Spirit into him, brings his soul into order again. And until God thus pours out his grace into his heart, the soul continues thus sottish, stupid, foolish, and distracted ; as the fall of our first parents made it. And all sinners, so long as such, being still in their natural condition, the same wherein they were born, and which the first sin brought them into, it is no wonder that they act like themselves, that is, like foolish and distracted persons. Hence, as we usually call a fool a mere natural, that is, no wiser than he was born ; so may every sinner be truly termed a natural, one still in his natural condition, no better than when he came into the world, that is, as bad as bad can be : hence also it is that Christ is said to be the Physician of souls ; because it is he who cures us of this sad distemper, and sets our souls at rights again, reducing our understandings, wills, and affections, to their right order, and to their primitive frame and constitution.

And until men be thus renewed and recovered to their former health and strength of mind, they are mere naturals, void of all true wisdom and understanding ; and therefore it is no wonder that they play so many foolish tricks as generally they do in the world. Which being the last thing that I promised to shew, I shall demonstrate it from several instances, wherein all sinners, that is, all that still continue in sin, without turning to the living God, so plainly discover their natural folly and distraction, that any one that doth but see them, may know what they are by what they do.

As first, there is one piece of folly, which all

mankind naturally are guilty of, and that is covetousness or desire of riches ; whereby men love and long for fine houses and lands, and silver and gold, and such like things. Just as we may have sometimes seen a natural fool or idiot pleasing himself with having his pocket full of stones or dirt ; or rather, as distracted persons desire swords, or such like weapons, whereby to destroy themselves ; so others that have lost their senses, and the right use of their reason, nothing will serve their turn but a great deal of wealth, howsoever they come by it ; and therefore go through a thousand temptations and dangers to get it : and when they have got it, what then ? then they are in a thousand times worse condition than they were before ; for now they have got a snake in their bosoms, which, without a great deal of care indeed, will soon eat out their bowels ; it being so difficult a matter for a rich man to be happy, or to escape misery, that our Saviour himself saith it is impossible, without the miraculous power and omnipotence of God himself, Matt. xix. 23, 24, 25. Hence Agar, being cured of his frenzy and distraction, was afraid of riches, and prayed that he might have no more than food convenient, Prov. xxx. 8. He was sensible that the nature of man is very weak and frail, not able to wield or manage much of this world ; and therefore very wisely desired no more than what he was able to digest, as knowing that if he had more, he might surfeit on it. And yet it is strange to observe how eager men are in the pursuit of this world ; they would have they do not know what ; they would willingly be happy, but they do not care for any thing that conduceth to their being so ; they do not care to be miserable, and yet they cannot forbear longing and labouring for such things as naturally tend to make them so : they daily pray that God would not lead them into temptations, and yet they earnestly desire to be

tempted, as all rich men undoubtedly are. It is through many temptations that they must get to heaven, if they ever come there: and yet men are generally as much desirous of wealth, as if it was all the heaven and happiness that they are capable of, yea, so far, that they desire oftentimes to have more riches rather than to enjoy what they have, always plotting and contriving how to get money, but never contriving how to use it, not knowing who shall enjoy it. This was one of the follies or vanities that Solomon observed in the world, and speaks of, Eccles. ii. 18, 19. And tell me who, but he that is a fool or madman, would lie down late, and rise up early, and eat the bread of carefulness and sorrow, and all for that which he never enjoys, nor makes any use of, when he hath it. Who but a fool will make such a mad bargain as to sell heaven for earth, and yet will not enjoy, nor take any comfort in what he hath gotten upon earth neither, but spend his time, his strength, his parts, his all, for he knows not what, and then leave it to he knows not whom? What a madness and folly is this! for men to be thus busy in running after shadows, thus eager in the pursuit of trifles, and when they think they have got them fast, then to let go their hold again, and want them when they have them. I believe there is none here present but have heard and seen several instances of this kind, and have called such persons fools for their pains. But have a care that yourselves be not guilty of the same folly.

2dly, Drunkenness is another great piece of folly which men are commonly subject to; having not reason enough to keep the little reason which they have, but they must needs deprive themselves of that too, only to indulge their carnal appetite. And as Solomon saith of all things, *that they are vanity of vanities*; so this may justly be termed, *the folly of follies*: it being such a folly, that men do not only

play the fool in it, but make themselves by it worse fools than they were before. For, as if their brains were not distempered enough before, they must needs distemper them again, and so lay themselves open to all manner of sin and folly in the world, by which means they become the derision of men, the laughing-stock of Satan, contemned by angels, abhorred by God himself, as being more like to brutes than men.

3dly, Another clear instance of the egregious folly and distraction of sinful men, may be seen in their murmuring and repining at the providences of God; being discontented, vexing and fretting themselves at what falls out in the world, as if your fretting could mend the matter, or as if you knew better how to order the world than he that made it. Silly fool! that thou shouldest thus kick against the pricks, and spurn at Omnipotence itself. When God chastiseth thee for thy sins, and lays condign punishments upon thee for thy transgressing of his righteous laws, what canst thou get by all thy fretting and tormenting thyself at it? Will he remove his rod because thou criest under it? No, mistake not thyself, he will rather continue it upon thee, until thou holdest thy peace, and learnest so much wit as to submit thyself to the wise disposal of him that made thee, and knows what is good and needful for thee, infinitely better than thou either dost or canst.

4thly, What a foolish thing also is it to envy and fret at another's prosperity; for thee to make thyself miserable, because God hath made thy neighbour happy; for thee to be cast down, because he is lifted up; for thee to mourn because another rejoiceth; for thee to be troubled because another is not? As if thou hadst not misery enough of thine own, but thou must needs create thyself more; and rather than want it, thou wilt suck misery and grief

out of thy neighbour's happiness and prosperity. And if there be any among you guilty of this sin, as I fear there are many, blame me not for calling you fools for it; it is no more than what David called himself; who when he had been fretting to see others in health whilst himself was sick, others at liberty whilst himself was in restraint, others at ease whilst himself had pain, others flourishing whilst himself seemed to decay in the world; he did no sooner consider with himself what he had done, but he presently called himself fool for it: *so foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a brute before thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 22.

5thly, Swearing also is another great folly which sinful mortals are commonly addicted to; which must certainly be acknowledged to be one of the greatest follies in the world; for men to ruin, destroy, and damn themselves for nothing; to take the sacred name of the most high God in vain, when they can reap neither pleasure, profit, nor honour from it. And verily, there being so little or rather nothing at all gotten by this sin or folly, I have sometimes wondered with myself what should be the reason that so many are addicted to it, and guilty of it. And all the reason that I could ever find out why men allow themselves in so unreasonable a sin as this is, is only this, they therefore indulge themselves in it because it is a sin. Had God commanded it, they would have been naturally averse from it; but seeing God hath forbidden it, therefore are they so desperately inclined to it: so that seeing there is no other pleasure to be taken in this sin, they will therefore take pleasure in it, because it is a sin. But I wish such profane and foul-mouthed ruffians of the world, who never think they speak rhetorically enough, unless they back each word and emphasis, each sentence, with an oath; I wish, I say, they would at length bethink themselves what a

foolish and ridiculous thing it is thus to offend the supreme Governor of the world, by taking his sacred name into their polluted lips in vain. But that I know is no motive to drive them from this sin, but rather an encouragement to draw them to it : for was not God so much offended at it, they would not be so much delighted in it. I wish therefore they would consider, that they do not only offend God, but accuse and condemn themselves too, by every oath they swear: they condemn themselves, I say, for men of no credit ; for persons never to be believed, unless they bring God himself to witness what they say, as being conscious to themselves that they have given the world too much cause to suspect that they always equivocate and lie, and so are not worthy to be believed without an oath. For an oath, as St. Chrysostom observes, is the bringing of a surety to witness what we say, ὥς τε πρώτη κατηγορία αὐτῆ τοῦ ὁμνούντος ; so that he that swears, first accuseth himself to be one not worthy to be believed without a surety or witness ; yea so great a one as God himself. Hence it is that St. Basil himself long ago pronounced those who are guilty of this sin to be very fools. Αἰσχρὸν γὰρ παντὶ καὶ ἀνόητον ἑαυτοῦ κατηγορεῖν ὡς ἀναξίου πίστεως καὶ τὴν ἐκ τῶν ὀρκῶν ἀσφάλειαν ἐπιφέρεισθαι. It is a very foul and foolish thing, saith he, for a man to accuse himself as one not worthy to be believed, as a man of no credit, and therefore to confirm what he saith by an oath. A foolish thing it is indeed to be one's own accuser and condemner, yet such a fool is every swearer ; insomuch that I do not think myself bound to believe any thing that such a man swears : for he that will swear, be sure will lie. He that doth not fear to offend God, will much less fear to deceive men in what he saith : and therefore, although they may fancy themselves the wits of the world, yet not only all sober men, but God himself, will repute them to be no better than the worst of fools.

6thly, And this suggests unto me another piece of folly, and a great one too, common among men, and that is pride, haughtiness, and ambition : even for vain man to be puffed up with pride, and high towering conceits of himself, merely because it pleased the great God to lay a little bigger burden of earth upon his back than his neighbours have ; for sorry dust and ashes to pride itself in his own emptiness and vanity ; for a silly worm to think himself a giant, because he hath got a little larger hole or house to creep into, than his fellow worms have : which must needs argue a strange delirium and frenzy in them that do so. For nothing can be more certain than that all pride is both the symptom and product of a distempered brain. And the only reason that can be alleged why men build such castles in the air, and erect such fools' paradises to themselves, conceiting themselves to be such rare accomplished persons, is merely because they are beside themselves : and it is ordinary for madmen and fools to do so ; as we may see by those sad spectacles in Bedlam, how they please and pride themselves in their miserable condition, conceiting the holes they lie in to be palaces, the irons they are fettered with to be chains of gold, and all that come near them to be their servants, or rather subjects, themselves being no less than kings and princes in their own conceits ; whereas, when they come to themselves, they find the contrary. So here, so long as a man continues in a state of sin, and so is besides himself, if he hath but a little land, he fancieth it to be a kingdom ; if men do but look upon him, he thinks they admire him ; if he hath but got a few fine feathers upon his back, and a little refined earth in his pocket, then he presently reckons all about him to be below him, as if he was the only person in the world to be admired by all : but when once it pleaseth the most high God to recover such

a man from his distemper, to bring him to himself and his wits again, then he is presently of another mind, and finds that the former conceits which he had of himself were nothing but the delusions of his own distracted fancy : and therefore needs none to tell him that he was before a fool : as every proud man must needs be ; for if he was not a fool, it would be impossible for him to be proud. If he had but so much wit as to know himself, he could not but see enough in every corner of his heart, and in every action of his life, to make him humble. And the wiser any man is, be sure the more humble he must needs be. Who was wiser than our Saviour, who was wisdom itself? and yet he was the very mirror and pattern of humility : *Learn of me*, saith he, *for I am meek and lowly*, Matt. xi. 29. And what! shall the eternal God himself be humble, and shall vain man be proud? Shall he that inhabiteth eternity be lowly, and shall such as dwell in dirt and clay be lofty? Shall our great Creator himself vouchsafe to stoop to us. and shall we disdain to stoop to one another? This certainly is the very top of folly, the height of madness and distraction, thus to act directly contrary to infinite wisdom and prudence itself.

7thly, And if we should farther consider the many follies that men commit in matters of religion, and in the things that immediately belong to their eternal happiness, it would be as hard to reckon how many, as it is to describe how great they are. The Wise-man tells us, *that fools make a mock of sin*, Prov. xiv. 9. and so we may say, *that fools make a sport of religion*. As they are the most serious about trifles, so are they most trifling in serious things; playing with religion, and making it a mere stalking-horse to catch repute and credit in the world. Hence it is there are so many fools among us, that take up with the form instead of the power of god-

liness, that care not how sinful they are in themselves, so they can but be accounted holy by others; and therefore palliate the most atrocious crimes under the outward garb and profession of religion; which kind of hypocrisy is certainly the highest folly imaginable, it having the greatest woes in the Gospel denounced against it.

And how many egregious follies are every day committed in the popish religion, where men sin against heaven, and then go to Rome for a pardon; offend Christ, and then ask forgiveness of the pope; commit their sins, and then go and confess them; confess them, then go and commit them again; believe the consecrated wafer to be the very body and blood of Christ, and yet eat it all up at a mouthful, bones and all; give a penny to the poor, and think to purchase heaven by it, as if heaven was worth no more than a penny, or a penny worth as much as heaven; they say their prayers, but never pray at all, not knowing what themselves say; they will say an *Ave Maria* to the blessed Virgin, and then think they honour God; bow to an image, and then conclude they have worshipped him whom no image can represent; abstain from flesh, and surfeit upon fish, and this they call fasting; call any one a heretic, whom they please, persecute him to death, and then think they have done God good service: and a thousand such ridiculous follies are wrought each day among them; which plainly argues them to be fanatics desperately overgrown with frenzy and distraction.

But we need not have gone so far to have found so much folly in matters of religion; we have too much of it, I fear, among ourselves: for how many have we among us, who being convinced of the necessity of repentance, will repent indeed, but it shall be of some sins only, not of all; whereas one sin unrepented of will destroy us as well as a thou-

sand, and therefore it is a foolish thing to think such a repentance will stand us in any stead. Others there are among us who think they ought to repent, and therefore intend to do it hereafter; but still put it off, and adjourn it from day to day. Thou canst not repent now; but thou wilt repent to-morrow, or next day, or next week, or one of these days; when thou canst get time and leisure. But how well may I say to thee, as it was said to the rich man in the Gospel, *Thou fool, this night may thy soul be taken from thee.* Thou dost not know but before to-morrow morning thou mayest be in another world, and there thou wilt repent indeed; but it will do thee no good. Thou wert such a fool, as not to act thy repentance when thou shouldest, and God will be so wise as not to accept of it when thou dost.

But time would fail me should I reckon up the several follies that sinful men are guilty of, every one of their actions being nothing else. And therefore I shall instance only in one more great folly and vanity, which I have observed to be very common among the sons of men, there being but very few free from it; and that is, that sin is not accounted folly by us; and howsoever sinful men are, they still conceit themselves to be very wise. And I fear there are too many such among us at this time, who are not wise enough to think themselves to be fools: and therefore, although I have shewn what a folly it is to sin, yet you cannot yet believe your sins to be your follies; but assure yourselves, that although it be a great folly to sin, it is a far greater not to think sin to be a folly: yea it is, certainly it is, the greatest folly in the world, not to think sin the greatest folly in the world; which, the premises considered, none but fools either will or can deny. And therefore, to conclude,

Men and brethren, I have endeavoured to shew

and prove this day, that every sinner is a fool, and every sin a folly. I know there are many understanding persons among you who have heard what hath been said upon this subject ; some, I hope, who are wise towards God, understanding the things that appertain to their everlasting peace : and such I am sure cannot but acknowledge the truth of what they have heard. Others, I fear, may be wise enough for the world, understanding how to manage their trades to the best advantage, and how to make a good bargain as well as the best. And such can hardly be persuaded that they are fools in any thing, because they think themselves to be wise in some things : to such my humble advice is, that you would seriously weigh what you have heard, and not suffer yourselves to be fooled into a vain conceit of your own wisdom ; for assure yourselves, there is not the most ignorant person in the congregation that fears God, but is far wiser than the wisest of you that do not ; for such a one's little knowledge is true wisdom, your great cunning is your real folly : and therefore, if you would manifest yourselves for the future to be wise and prudent persons indeed, lay aside your former follies, and devote yourselves wholly to the fear and service of Almighty God ; for till you do so, you have not attained to the very first degree of wisdom : *for the fear of the Lord is the beginning*, &c.

SERMON XCIX.

THE WISDOM OF BEING HOLY.

PSAL. cxi. 10.

A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.

AS none can know God and not fear him, so neither can any one fear God aright, but he must needs endeavour at least sincerely to obey him: for he whose heart is possessed with such a sense of God's greatness, power, and glory, as makes him stand in awe and fear of him, he will not dare to do any thing wilfully which he knows will offend him, nor yet to omit any thing which he thinks will be pleasing and acceptable unto him. Hence, the fear of the Lord in Scripture is usually put for the whole duty of man, for holiness or piety in general, or for the conformity of our wills and actions unto the laws and commands of God; because it is impossible that any one should fear God, and yet not serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.

In this sense therefore it is that the fear of the Lord is to be understood in this place, where the Psalmist saith, that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*; that is, a total submission of our wills to God's, and a sincere endeavour to please and obey him in all things, is the beginning of wisdom: so that a man doth not so much as begin to be wise, and by consequence, is a very fool, until

his mind be so enlightened, his will rectified, and his whole man so sanctified throughout, that he devotes himself wholly to the service and honour of Almighty God ; for till then he remains a mere natural, no better than he came into the world, if not much worse, strangely distempered in his brain, distracted in his mind, and corrupt in all the faculties of his soul, and therefore he cannot but be very disorderly in his life and conversation. And hence it is that sinful men, that is, men still in their natural and sinful estate, are guilty of so many egregious follies as commonly they are, not knowing to do any thing aright but sin ; losing heaven to gain earth, and selling their souls to gratify their senses ; admiring nothing so much as gilded dirt, and preferring it before the chiefest good ; gaping after popular airs, and choosing it rather than eternal glory ; kicking against the pricks, and rebelling against Majesty and Omnipotence itself ; standing continually upon the very brink of the bottomless pit, and yet thinking themselves secure ; and yet for all this, conceiting themselves to be wise and prudent, noble and gallant persons, as natural fools and madmen usually do ; which, together with many such-like ridiculous and foolish acts, so frequently committed by the sons of men, are both the clear symptoms and ordinary products of distempered brains : and therefore it is no wonder that they are so common amongst us, most men being still beside themselves, yea all who do not truly fear God ; for all such have not yet attained to the first beginning, not to the lowest degree, of wisdom, and so still remain in their natural folly and distraction, as the Psalmist here signifies to us, saying, that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*

But now when a man returns to God, then he begins to come to himself, so as to become a wise, prudent, and understanding person ; yea, a man of

good understanding, as is here in the next place suggested to us: *A good understanding*, saith he, *have all they that do his commandments.*

For the opening of which words we must first consider what is here meant by a good understanding: for which we must know, that every man naturally hath an understanding, without which he could not be a man: for the understanding is the seat and fountain of all that reason and knowledge whereby men are distinguished from brute beasts; this being that faculty of the soul whereby alone we excel mere sensitive creatures, by being capable of apprehending and discerning betwixt truth and falsehood, good and evil, which other creatures cannot do. But now, by nature every man's understanding is very bad and corrupt, that being as much depraved in its apprehensions as the will is in its affections; so that it ordinarily mistaketh truth for falsehood, and falsehood for truth; good for evil, and evil for good; by which means it comes to pass, that men may be very subtile and cunning, and yet not wise and prudent; or, as the prophet saith, *they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge*, Jer. iv. 22. And I fear there are many such amongst ourselves, who are very cunning and ingenious at driving on a bargain, very witty and jocular at censuring and backbiting others, very nimble and ready at over-reaching their neighbour, that can commit any sin as dexterously and artificially as if they had been bred up to it all their lifetime, as really they were; whereas set them about any thing that is truly good, as to repent of their sins, meditate upon God, examine their own hearts, or the like, and they know no more how to do it, than as if they had never heard of any such thing before; which plainly shews, that though they have an understanding, it is but a very bad one: in contradistinction to which bad understanding which they have that do not fear God, the

Psalmist here saith, *There is a good understanding in them that do his commandments.* They have not only an understanding as well as others, but it is a good one; good, not so much in respect of the act, as object. Others may have a quicker understanding than they; but theirs is far better than others, because it is placed upon better objects, and so serves them to better purpose than the others do: so that by it they are able to distinguish aright between good and evil, so as to apprehend God as truly good, and evil as truly evil, which others cannot, and therefore have that woe denounced against them, Isa. v. 20. Hence therefore it is, that whatsoever understandings other persons may have; how great and large soever they may be; howsoever wise, discreet, and learned they may seem in their own or others' eyes; so long as they do not fear God and keep his commandments, they are no better than fools and madmen in God's esteem; whereas such as are truly pious and devout, however ignorant and simple they may appear to men, though they have not so much wit to get great estates, and manage worldly businesses with that cunning and dexterity as others do; if they have but wisdom enough to serve and obey God, they are truly wise and prudent persons: others may have greater understanding, but far worse than theirs; they may have less, but better than others; for howsoever little it is, be sure it is good. *A good understanding, have all they that do his commandments: that do his commandments;* in the Hebrew it is לְכָל עֹשֵׂיהֶם *to all that do them*; and expositors something differ in assigning the antecedent to the pronoun *them*. The Syriac translation makes the fear of God to be the antecedent, rendering the words thus; *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding to him that doth it, that is, that feareth the Lord.* The Arabic makes the wisdom of God the antecedent, *A good under-*

standing have all they that act by it; that is, by that wisdom which is the fear of the Lord: so the LXX. *Σύνεσις ἀγαθὴ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιούσιν αὐτήν, a good understanding have all they that act it*; that is, the wisdom before spoken of; upon which St. Chrysostom saith, *τοῖς ποιούσιν αὐτήν, τούτέστι, τοῖς ποιούσι τὴν σοφίαν, καὶ διὰ τῶν ἔργων ἐπιδεικνυμένοις, to such as do it*; that is, to such as act that wisdom, and manifest it by their works. But if I had a mind to play the critic, I might easily shew how the Hebrew pronoun being in the plural number, cannot so properly be referred to any one, as to both those antecedents, even to the fear of the Lord, and wisdom too; that the sense should be, *A good understanding have all they that are so wise as to fear the Lord*: but which way soever we take them, they will all amount to one and the same thing, and centre in that exposition which our translation gives of them, even, *that they only have a good understanding that keep God's commandments*. For as he is no wise man that doth not fear God, so neither can he be said to fear God that doth not keep his commandments; fearing God and keeping his commandments being indeed equivalent and convertible terms: for that man in vain pretends to fear God that doth not obey his commandments; where by his commandments we are to understand whatsoever the most high God hath enjoined us to do, either in his Law or Gospel, whether it concerns his glory immediately, or else our neighbour's good. And whereas it is said, his commandments, we are to understand it indefinitely, of one as well as another, and so of all his commandments.

The words being thus explained, present us with this plain but great truth, asserted not only by the Psalmist, but God himself, that every one that truly fears God and keeps his commandments is a wise man, a man of a good understanding; though not perhaps in the esteem of silly mortals upon earth, yet in the judgment of the God of heaven, the

supreme Being, the sovereign Monarch of the whole world, who doth not only assert it in my text, but elsewhere, saying, *He that keepeth the law is a wise son*, Prov. xxviii. 7. not he that knoweth, but he that keepeth the law is wise: so that one man may know more than another, and yet the other be a wiser man than he; for wisdom doth not consist so much in knowledge as in action: a man that knows much may be a fool, and he that knows but little may be a wise man; for he that knows much and doth little, his knowledge will do him more hurt than good, and therefore for all his knowledge he is but a fool; yea, the more he knows the more fool he is, because he knows what to do that he may be happy, but will not do it; he knows how to escape danger, but yet will run into it; which is certainly the highest piece of folly in the world: whereas on the other side, though a man knows but little, and yet does what he knows, his little knowledge will do him much good, as the other's great knowledge doth him but little good. And this, as St. Chrysostom observes, is the wisdom spoken of in my text, σοφίαν δὲ οὐ τὴν ἐν ῥήμασιν ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐν πράγμασι λέγει, *He speaks not, saith he, of wisdom in words, but of wisdom in works*; not of that wisdom whereby a man knows what to do, but of that whereby a man doth what he knows: that is true wisdom indeed; and whatsoever comes short of that, deserves not the glorious name and title of wisdom; in which sense, nothing can be more certain than that he is the only wise man, or hath a good understanding, that keepeth the commandments of God.

But wisdom being a thing which most pretend to, and all desire, a right understanding and thorough conviction of this great truth cannot but be very prevalent with you, to use the utmost of your endeavour to walk in all the commandments of God blameless; and seeing it is your only wisdom so to do, I shall further explain and confirm it unto you,

by shewing the *ἔτι* that it is so, that he that fears God and keeps his commandments is really a wise man ; and then the *διότι* or how it comes to be so ; and then instancing in some particular acts wherein the wisdom of those that are truly pious discovers itself, and manifests to the world that they are the only wise men in it.

As for the first : to prove that the truly pious are the only wise men, or that they have a good understanding indeed that keep God's commandments, these arguments may be sufficient.

1. He that fears God and keeps his commandments must needs be a very wise man, a man of a good understanding ; for otherwise, as he would not fear God, so he could not keep his commandments. For he that doth not know God, be sure will never fear him. And therefore, he that fears him, must needs know him. And to know God is certainly the greatest piece of knowledge and wisdom that we can attain unto ; as ignorance of him is the greatest folly that we can be guilty of. And further, as a man will not fear God, so he cannot keep his commandments, unless he hath a good understanding ; there being a great deal of wisdom, discretion, and understanding required to the adjusting of our actions aright to the commands of God. And therefore, it must needs follow that he is a wise man that keeps God's commandments ; because, unless he was so he could not do so, he could not lead so good a life, unless he had first a good understanding. But if a man truly fears and obeys God, we cannot question but his understanding is very good, in that he understands what is truly good, and inclines his will also unto the embracement and prosecution of it ; which I look upon as the best, and indeed the only sign of a good understanding. For though a man hath never such high notions and speculations concerning good and evil, if his understanding of it doth not

influence and sway his will, so as to choose what he knows to be good, and to avoid what he knows to be evil, such a man at the best is but a knowing fool, or a foolish knowing man ; because though he hath the knowledge of these things, it doth him no good at all. But if a man gives up himself wholly to walk according to the dictates of his reason. and by consequence according to the commands of God, it is plain that such a man's understanding rules and governs his will and actions, and so that he doth not live as brutes and fools do, according as his lust and sensual appetite draw him, but as his reason and discretion dictate to him. And therefore we cannot but conclude him to be a very wise man indeed, a man of a good understanding, in that it is such an understanding as makes him a good man.

2. You will all acknowledge that it is a great part of a wise man to do the business he sets about, and to attend the end he aims at. He is a fool that never doth what he intends, nor accomplisheth what he desires. But when a man so behaveth himself, and manageth his affairs that he perfects what he is sent about, and conquers whatsoever he undertakes, he, you will all say, is a truly wise and prudent man. And such a one is every pious man, that fears God and keeps his commandments ; for he minds and doth the business that he came into the world about. For the great errand we were sent for, the only work we have here to do, is to glorify God, by observing and obeying his commands ; by which also we attain to what we desire. For happiness is the only thing that all men naturally desire, though some seek it in one thing, some in another : but all miss of it, but only such as fear and obey God ; for all the happiness that we are capable of, consists only in his love and favour, which it is impossible for us to gain unless we obey and please him, or to miss of if we sincerely endeavour to do so. Indeed there is unspeakable

happiness in obedience itself, as the Psalmist tells us, Psal. xix. 11. But the happiness which we shall have hereafter, if we obey God here, far exceeds our very thoughts as well as words, 1 Cor. ii. 9. But as this is the only happiness that we can be invested with, so there is no way of attaining to it, but only by holiness, Heb. xii. 14. And therefore, as they cannot but be looked upon as the worst of fools and madmen, that prefer their sins before such transcendent happiness as this is, so they who fear God, and obey his commandments, and by that means in and through Christ attain to this, not only the highest, but the only happiness they can possibly be made partakers of; such, I say, must needs be acknowledged to be men of great wisdom, and a good understanding indeed.

3. True wisdom discovereth itself very much in foreseeing and preventing dangers. He is a fool with a witness, that sees misery and ruin hanging over his head, and will not endeavour to avoid it; yet such is the folly of every sinner, that he is secure and careless of himself though he stands continually upon the brink of destruction. But he that truly fears God, and doth what he commands him, thereby prevents all the evils which foolish sinners run themselves into; he thereby avoids the wrath and displeasure of Almighty God, *who is angry with the wicked every day*, Psal. vii. 11. and so his fury and indignation is ready every moment to be poured forth upon them. And certainly, as God's love and favour is the greatest good, so is his anger the greatest evil of punishment in the world; yea, there is nothing of real evil or misery, but so far as it proceeds from the wrath of God. Crosses, reproaches, afflictions, sickness, death, these are no farther evil, than as they have a mixture of divine wrath in them; insomuch that as the greatest temporal misery with the love of God is a real blessing, so the greatest temporal

blessing in the world with his wrath and indignation is a real curse. But now this source of all miseries, this evil of all evils, such as keep God's commandments do most certainly prevent : for as there are none but sinners that God is angry with, so there is nothing but sin that he is angry for. And as they that thus sincerely obey God, avoid his wrath ; so they do likewise prevent the gnawings and torments of a guilty conscience, arising only from the apprehension of God's wrath enkindled against us for our sins committed against him. For this is the portion only of their cup that offend God. For as they abuse his mercies against him, he arms their consciences against them ; which accusing them of their folly and wickedness, their punishment for sin even in this life, far exceeds their pleasure in it. But now they who are truly godly, are so wise as to prevent all this misery, by keeping their *consciences void of offence both to God and man*, Acts xxiv. 16. Yea, by this means also they prevent eternal misery and confusion in the world to come, hell fire I mean, which is nothing else but the conjunction and perfection of the two insupportable evils before spoken of, as our Saviour himself intimates, Mark ix. 44. When the soul shall perfectly apprehend the eternal God as frowning upon it, and be as perfectly convinced of the sins which it hath foolishly committed against so glorious and dreadful a Being ; it is impossible to express what racks and tortures it will then be put upon. But howsoever great these miseries are, such as truly fear and serve God will never feel them, they being allotted only for them that do not so, Matt. xxv. 46. And therefore, we cannot but acknowledge such to be the only wise men in the world.

4. You may know a wise man also by his forecasting for the future, and seriously considering beforehand how to live, and be happy hereafter. It

is the part of a fool, a brute, to look only to the present time ; a wise man will provide for the time to come. *He that gathereth in summer, is a wise son,* Prov. x. 5. It is the part of a wise man to lay up in summer against winter, in a calm against a storm, in health against sickness, in life against death, much more in time against eternity. Thus wise are they, and they only, that fear God and keep his commandments ; for whilst others throw away their time upon the impertinencies of this present world, they provide for the world to come, *by laying up for themselves treasures in heaven,* Matt. vi. 20.

5. The principal thing whereby to know a wise man from a fool is his choice ; when of two evils he chooseth the least, and of two goods the best. This must needs argue a good understanding, able to discern betwixt good and evil, as also betwixt the greater and the lesser good. A sinner is such a fool that he counts good evil, and evil good ; puts light for darkness, and darkness for light. But he that fears God is so wise as always to choose the better part, Luke x. 42. He chooseth heaven before earth, holiness before sin, the love and favour of God before all things in the world besides : and so he chooseth the more noble, the more pleasant, the more profitable,† the more honest, the more necessary, the more lasting, and, by consequence, the better part of the two ; yea, the best of all. As Moses did to the children of Israel, Deut. xxx. 19. so doth God set before you all life and death, happiness and misery ; life and happiness, if you obey his commands ; death and misery, if you do not. Now such as keep his commandments, are so wise as to choose the life and happiness for themselves, and leave death and misery for such fools as all sinners are, to undergo. And therefore, all things considered, all that have any understanding among you, must needs grant that they only have a good understanding that fear and obey God.

The next question to be resolved is, how it comes to pass that they that fear God and keep his commandments, so far excel others in true wisdom, and a good understanding.

The reasons are,

1. Because such as truly fear God are come to themselves again; they are recovered from their former madness and distraction, to the right use of their senses and reason, which sinners are not: so long as a man remains in his natural condition, or until he return to God, his fancy is so disturbed, his mind distracted, and all his intellectuals so strangely broken, and out of order, that every thing is represented to him to be of a quite different nature from what it is in itself. He can see nothing of good in God himself, nothing of sinfulness in sin; yea he oft-times fancies to himself a great deal of good in evil, and of evil in good; happiness in sin, and misery in holiness. Hence the apostle saith, *that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him*, 1 Cor. ii. 14. That is, he is so far from looking upon the wisdom of God as wisdom, that he reckons it to be but foolishness; so far from reckoning the foolishness of sin to be foolishness, that he looks upon it as wisdom; so far from thinking good to be good, and evil, evil, that he judges good to be evil, and evil good. And therefore it is no wonder if he be a fool, seeing he looks upon it as his wisdom to be so; no wonder if he be so bad, seeing he reckons it his goodness to be so. But now, when God intends to work over a soul unto him, he dispels these dark shades of ignorance and error from off the face of the soul, and clears up its understanding, shewing it the goodness of God, and the sinfulness of sin; so that the soul is now able to discern betwixt the one and the other. Yea this is the first act which God passeth upon the soul, in order to its conversion, whereby it is so enlightened,

that it soon discovers its former folly and madness, and so it begins to come to itself again, and is able to consider and weigh things in the balance of right reason. And the mind being thus recovered from its former distemper, it is now able to pass a sound judgment upon every thing that is presented to it; so that now it apprehends God as an all-glorious, incomprehensible, and almighty Being, and therefore it cannot but fear and dread him: it apprehends the commandments of God to be infinitely just and righteous, and therefore it cannot but endeavour at least sincerely to observe and keep them. And the mind of such as do so, being thus composed and restored to its proper frame and constitution, they cannot but have a right and good understanding, and so become really and truly wise.

2. As by our returning unto God, and so coming to ourselves, we are made so wise as to be both able and willing to keep the commandments of God: so by our keeping the commandments, we every day may more and more increase our wisdom, and better our understanding; not only because the more we accustom ourselves to regulate our actions according to the laws of God, the better we shall be instructed and enabled to do that wherein our principal wisdom doth consist; but especially, because if we faithfully and constantly endeavour to fear and obey God in what he commands, he will teach us wisdom, and make known himself and his laws more and more unto us; and so clear up, and better our understandings in what is necessary for us to know and do. *I understand more than the ancients*, saith David, *because I keep thy commandments*, Psal. cxix. 100. and, *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies*, ver. 98. So that God by his commandments doth teach men wisdom, and makes them that keep them wiser than other people. Yea, the commandments themselves, by the grace of

God, help towards the refining of our knowledge, and the bettering our understandings. *The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes,* Psal. xix 7, 8. So that although a man be not of that quick understanding as some are in the laws of God, if he doth but sincerely endeavour to keep them as well as he can, God will enable him to know better what to do, as well as to do that better which he knows. To this purpose is that gracious promise of our blessed Saviour, *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him,* John xiv. 21 That is, he that loveth me so as to keep my commandments, I will so love him, as to manifest myself unto him, acquaint him with my will and pleasure, and so make him wise unto salvation, directing him in the way that leadeth to everlasting life. And therefore, it is no wonder that he that keepeth the commandments is wise, seeing wisdom itself hath promised to make him so, by unveiling and manifesting itself unto him. This therefore is the great and principal reason, why they that fear God are so wise, and so far exceed all others in prudence and understanding ; even because they are instructed by God and Christ himself, who is the fountain and source from whence all true wisdom and good understanding flow.

And that you may the better understand how wise all those are who are truly holy, who fear and obey God, I shall, in the last place, instance in some of those acts, wherein they shew forth that wisdom which they have received from above, and manifest to the world that they are the only men of a good understanding who keep the commandments of God. Indeed there is nothing which God hath commanded, but it is our wisdom to perform it ; as considering

that obedience to the laws that he hath enjoined us, is indispensably necessary to the obtaining of the happiness which he hath promised us. Howsoever that you may pass the better judgment upon all the rest, I shall instance only in some of those particular graces and virtues which it is our wisdom to act, and exercise ourselves continually in, that you may all be convinced that it is your wisdom as well as duty to fear God and keep his commands.

First, therefore, as it is God's most gracious command, so it is our great wisdom to repent; that is, to be thoroughly humbled for, resolved against, and converted from those sins which we have heretofore allowed and indulged ourselves in. For seeing sin is the only cause of evil, if it be our wisdom to repent of evil, it must needs be our wisdom to repent of sin; repenting of sin being the only way whereby it is possible for us to avoid the evil and punishments which are due unto it. *The heart of the wise*, saith Solomon, *is in the house of mourning*, Eccles. vii. 4. It is the trick of a fool to take pleasure in sin, but it is the part of a wise man to be sorry for it; yea, so to be sorry for it, as sincerely and constantly to endeavour to forsake and leave it. For tell me, is it not your wisdom to agree with your adversary in the way? Is it not your wisdom to get God reconciled to you, and yourselves reconciled to him? Is it not your wisdom to get out of the road to hell, and to turn into the narrow path that leads to heaven? Is it not your wisdom to refuse the evil, and choose the good, to avoid the misery, and embrace the happiness which is set before you? If you have but so much wit as to know what it is to be wise, you cannot but acknowledge those to be great acts of wisdom. And yet there is never a one of them can possibly be done without repentance; it being absolutely impossible either to please God here, or enjoy him hereafter, to escape hell torments, or attain to

the joys of heaven, without repentance. And therefore, let the vain and foolish world say what it will, the truly humble and penitent is the only wise and prudent man.

To believe in Jesus Christ, so as to trust and depend upon him, and him alone, for pardon, acceptance, and salvation; this is so great an act of wisdom, that we can do nothing wisely without it: for we can have no wisdom but what we receive from Christ; neither can we receive any from him, but by believing him; who is therefore said to be made our wisdom as well as our righteousness, 1 Cor. i. 30. because we are made wise by him, as well as accepted of as righteous in him. Hence, when the Galatians began to stagger and err from the faith of Christ, thinking to be justified by the works of the law, St. Paul calls them fools and madmen for their pains. *O foolish Galatians, saith he, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?* Gal. ii. 21. iii. 1, 2. Who hath bewitched you? implying, that they which think to be justified or saved by their own obedience and good works, are certainly bewitched and seduced by some lying spirit or other. For no man in his right wits can possibly think that his future obedience can satisfy for his former sins, and that a few weak performances upon earth could merit eternal glory. These are fond conceits, and such as no sober and prudent person will be ever persuaded to entertain; especially, considering that we have now a certain and infallible way found out, whereby never a soul of us but may attain to the pardon of our sins, and the eternal salvation of our immortal souls, and that is by the faith in Jesus Christ; *who is able to save to the utmost all those that come unto God by him,* Heb. vii. 25. And tell me, seeing there is but one way whereby you can go to God and be saved, is it not

your wisdom to walk in it? Seeing there is but one Redeemer of mankind that can deliver you from sin and hell, is it not your wisdom to haste to him? Seeing there is but one city of refuge in all the world, which can defend you from your pursuits of divine wrath, is it not your wisdom to haste thither? Seeing there is but one Physician that can cure you of your spiritual distempers, is it not your wisdom to go to him? Seeing there is but one Advocate in the court of heaven that can plead your cause at the throne of grace, is it not your wisdom to retain him? Seeing there is but one sure rock in all the world that can keep you from sinking into the bottomless ocean, the abyss of misery, is it not your wisdom to anchor your hope on him? In a word, *seeing there is no name given under heaven whereby you can be saved, but the name of Christ*, Acts iv. 12. and yet, seeing there is no way neither of being saved by him, but by believing in him, is it not then your wisdom to lay hold upon him, to believe in him, and obey his Gospel? What is, if this be not wisdom?

3. Humility also is another especial instance of true wisdom; when a man is low and humble in his own esteem, how high soever he be in others. For this argues that a man hath a good understanding, he is acquainted with his own heart, he knows how vile and sinful he is, and therefore cannot but be humble in his own sight. And questionless, it is as great a piece of wisdom to be humble, as it is a folly to be proud and haughty. If I see a man proud, I am presently apt to suspect him to be a fool, one that doth not know himself, that knows not how much sin, venom, and corruption is within him. For if he saw it, he could not but abhor himself, and be humbled under it. An heathen poet, Persius by name, could say, *Tecum habita et nosces quam sit tibi curta supellex*: Live at home, live with thyself, look into thy own heart, and thou shalt soon see how

little thou hast to be proud of; or rather, how much thou hast to be humbled for. For what hast thou to be proud of? Art thou proud of thy wisdom? if thou hast any thou couldest not be proud: *Seest thou a man wise in his own eyes?* saith Solomon; *there is more hopes of a fool than of him*, Prov. xxvi. 12. So that he that thinks himself wise, is a fool; yea, he is therefore a fool, because he thinks himself wise. Art thou proud of the strength of thy body, or the greatness of thy estate? Thus saith wisdom itself, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; let not the strong man glory in his strength; let not the rich man glory in his riches*, Jer. ix. 23. And verily, a horse hath as much cause to be proud of his trappings or burden, as any man hath to be proud of any thing he hath or can have here below. And therefore, whatsoever our outward condition be, how great soever our gifts and parts, yea, how strong soever our graces and virtues are, it is still our wisdom to be humble in our own eyes, and to live as those who believe that great truth, that we can never think too highly of God, nor too lowly of ourselves.

4. Another great piece of wisdom, whereby they that truly fear God manifest themselves to have a good understanding indeed, is charity, or a free and liberal distribution of what we have ourselves, to such as want it. For this is the way *to make unto ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*, Luke xvi. 9. This is the way to enrich ourselves by relieving others. Neither is there any other way in the world to be rich, and to improve our estates, but this. For what we have is not our own, but only God lends it to us to lay out for him; but what we give is our own, for we lend it to God to lay it up for us. *He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again*, Prov. xix. 17. So that what I have is God's; but what I give is mine own. For I have lent it to God, and

have his word for it, that he will pay it to me again; which is infinitely surer than all the bonds in the world. And so, when God lends an estate to us, we are his debtors for it; but when we give any thing to the poor, God acknowledgeth himself our debtor for that. And therefore, what we keep we cannot call ours, because we owe it unto God; but what we give, we may call our own, because God owes it to us, having bound himself by his promise, that he will pay us it again. To this purpose I have met with an excellent passage in St. Chrysostom; *Why therefore*, saith he, *dost thou deprive thyself of those things which God would have thee to possess; for he hath therefore commanded thee to give to another, that thou thyself mightest have it*, ἕως γὰρ μόνος κατέχεις οὐδὲ αὐτὸς ἔχεις, ὅταν δὲ ἐτέρω ὥς τότε καὶ αὐτὸς ἔλαβες, *so long as thyself keep-est it, not so much as thyself hath it; but when thou givest it to another, then thou receivest it to thyself*. So that what we keep, that we want; what we give, that we have; for at the same time that we give it to another, we receive it ourselves. And this is laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven, by laying out for God the treasures that we have upon earth; which being the only good use that we can possibly make of what we have, it must needs be acknowledged a great piece of wisdom thus to employ what God hath entrusted with us to our own advantage.

5. The wisdom of those who are truly righteous appears also in the resignation of their wills to God's. As we see wisdom itself did, in our blessed Saviour, who could say, *Not my will, but thine be done*. And verily, thus to resign our wills to God's, so as to have no wills as it were of our own, but to submit ourselves wholly to be guided by the will of God. is as high an act of wisdom as it is possible for us to exert; for by this means we may always have our wills, because they are the same with God's, which is

always done. Nay, when we have thus given our wills to God's, so as to entrust him always to will for us; all providences whatsoever are, in effect, by the acts of our own wills, with this extraordinary advantage, that they are guided and directed by the infinite wisdom and goodness of God. And as it is the wisdom of a patient to let the physician choose what diet, physic, and the like, he must have, so it is much more our wisdom thus to entrust God to choose for us, and to be well pleased with his choice, though never so cross to our sinful desires; because we cannot but acknowledge that he knows infinitely better than ourselves what is good or hurtful for us; especially, considering also that by this means we may make a virtue of necessity. For God's will be sure must be done, whether we will or no; and therefore it is madness in us to resist or gainsay it, and our greatest wisdom wholly to submit ourselves unto it, and always to acquiesce contented in it.

Thus I might shew all other acts of true piety whatsoever, that it is our wisdom to perform them; and that the truly pious manifest themselves to be the only wise men, by every act of obedience which they perform to the commandments of God. For what? Doth wisdom teach you to live happily in the world? Then the godly are the only wise men yet; who often retire to the vexatious bustles and tumults of this distracting world, that they may fix and unite their hearts to draw nigh to God, and enjoy communion with the chiefest good, the fountain of all true happiness. Doth wisdom teach you to prefer the good before the evil? Then they that fear God are wise in choosing the greatest suffering rather than the least sin; there being more real evil in the least sin than in the greatest suffering imaginable. Doth wisdom teach you to consult your books to see what others owe to you and you to others, that you may know your outward estate and condi-

tion? How much wiser are the godly, who oft examine themselves, and consider how the case stands betwixt God and their souls? Is it your wisdom to have a care of yourselves, and not to run headlong into ruin and perdition? Then there is none so wise as the godly, who are always watchful over themselves, and careful to avoid sin, the only cause of all their misery. Is it your wisdom to do that well which you can do but once, and which can never be mended, if it be once ill done? Then certainly they that truly fear God must carry away the palm for wisdom from all the world besides: for they are always ready to die, and so to do that well which they can never do again. They were the foolish virgins which wanted it; the wise had oil in their lamps, true grace in their hearts, and so were ready when the bridegroom came; and therefore they entered into the bride-chamber, when the others were shut out, and with all their importunities could never after be admitted to come in.

But what need I instance in any more particulars? These may be sufficient to demonstrate, that the fear of the Lord, or true holiness, is the *ראשית*, both the beginning and the end of true wisdom; having proved unto you that sinners, so long as such, are mere fools, not having attained so far as to the first beginning of wisdom; and that saints, so far as such, are truly wise. All which I have endeavoured to explain with that clearness and perspicuity, that none of you that have any understanding at all but must needs confess, that they only have a good understanding that fear God and keep his commandments. And therefore, I hope you have all prevented me in what I intended for the application of this truth; which was to advise and stir you up to do that which you cannot but be now convinced is not only your duty and interest, but your wisdom too to do; even to devote yourselves for the future wholly to the

service of Almighty God, to fear, honour, and obey him : for I cannot persuade myself but you all desire to act like wise men. This I am sure of, you all either are or would be accounted wise : but assure yourselves, whatsoever your condition be in this world, howsoever cunning and subtile you may be in the management of worldly affairs, whatsoever conceits you may have of yourselves, whatsoever opinion others may entertain of you, yet in the judgment of wise men, and of the all-wise God himself, you neither are nor can be truly wise until you be truly good. And therefore, if any of you desire, as I hope you all do, to manifest yourselves to be sober and discreet, wise and prudent men and women, take this course to do it ; break off your former sins by repentance, and shewing mercy to the poor, and believe in Christ for pardon and salvation, love God's person and obey his precepts, trust on his promises, and fear his threatenings, sanctify his sabbaths, and reverence his name, be loyal to your sovereign, and obedient to magistrates, be faithful to your friends, and loving to your enemies, kind and charitable, just and equitable unto all : in a word, *fear God, and keep his commandments ; for this is the whole duty of man,* and his wisdom too, Dan. xii. 3.

S E R M O N C.

THE PLEASURE OF BEING HOLY.

PROV iii. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

MAN being at first made capable of the greatest pleasures that it was possible for a creature to be instated in, and likewise instated in all the pleasures that his nature was capable of, although by his fall in Adam he lost and forfeited the actual possession of them, yet his capacity still remaining, he cannot but be restless and unquiet until it be filled again, and his soul be restored to the enjoyment of the same pleasures which it was before endowed with. Hence it comes to pass that all men in the world desire pleasures, and therefore are still seeking after something or other to delight themselves in; but it is strange to consider what low and pitiful things they that are fallen men take up with instead of pleasure. Some please themselves with running after the beasts of the field; others with pursuing the fowls of the air; others again with ensnaring the fishes of the sea; some take pleasure in solitude and retirements, others in the crowds and bustles of the world; some take pleasure in running over the histories of former ages, others in censuring the transactions of the present times; some delight in stretching their brains

with high metaphysical notions, others can even surfeit themselves upon the pleasures of a mathematical demonstration ; some hug themselves with the thoughts of their temporal estates, others are even transported at the smiles of an earthly prince vouchsafed to them ; some take pleasure in lust and luxury, others in drunkenness and gluttony. Indeed there is no act a man can do, no object that a man can meet with, nor no sin that a man can commit, but some or other takes pleasure in it : which clearly shews that men will take pleasure in any thing rather than nothing ; and that pleasure is a thing that all men desire, insomuch that they will rather do violence to their very natures, and stoop so low as to be fellow-commoners with the beasts that perish, in their brutish and sensual pleasures, rather than have no pleasure at all.

And I suppose there are none here present can be exempted from the common estate and condition of all mankind in this particular, but that you, as others, are all desirous of pleasures and delight in the world ; and you cannot be blamed for it, for it is that you were all designed to have ; and therefore it cannot but be lawful for you to endeavour after it. But the question is, what the true pleasure is, and how it may be attained ; for nothing can be more certain, than that those things which mankind are generally delighted in, cannot afford them any real pleasure at all ; be sure not such as was at first appointed for them : for they are much below so high and noble a creature as man is, to content or please himself with : and therefore it must needs concern us all in a very high manner to search into the true nature of pleasure, and to consider wherein it may be had. But for this we have just cause to suspect our own judgments, because we have found by our own woful experience, that they have often failed us already, and have passed the sentence of pleasure upon such

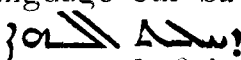
things as we have found to bring misery and torment along with them ; or at the best have frustrated our expectation in affording us no solid and real satisfaction at all, in the enjoyment of them. And therefore waving our own judgments, we must consult some or other who understands our temper and constitution so well as to know better than ourselves what is, and what is not, pleasant and delightsome to us : but that none can do but God, who having made us at first, and still preserving us by his almighty power, he cannot but be thoroughly acquainted with the frame and disposition of our bodies, as likewise with the tendency and inclinations of our souls, and by consequence, understand wherein our happiness and pleasure doth consist, infinitely better than ourselves can do. To him therefore let us appeal, and resolve to submit to his judgment in the case, which we cannot but acknowledge to be beyond exception. But how shall we come to know what he that made us judges to be most satisfactory and pleasant to us ? For that we need go no farther than the words I have now read, wherein he hath delivered his opinion in the case as clearly as words could do it, saying, *Her ways are ways of pleasantness*, &c. The meaning whereof in general is, that the exercise of true grace and virtue doth really afford the souls of men more solid peace and pleasure, than all things else in the world can do.

But that I may explain these words more clearly, and convince you more fully of this great truth contained in them, I shall,

I. Consider who, or what it is, whose ways are here said to be *ways of pleasantness*.

II. What we are to understand by her ways, which are here asserted to be *ways of pleasantness* ; and wherein they appear to be so.

III. Wherein it is that her ways exceed all other things in *pleasantness and peace*.

The first thing to be considered is, who, or what it is, of whom it is here said that *her ways are ways of pleasantness*. But that we may easily gather from the context; for the Wise-man, inspired by the Holy Ghost, is here speaking of wisdom, ver. 13. But then the principal question is, what the Wise-man understands by wisdom, in this and other places of this book, wherein it so frequently occurs. To which I answer, that by wisdom all along in this book of Proverbs, the Wise-man means such a knowledge and sense of God, as makes us continually to fear and dread him, as is plain from chap. i. 29. iii. 7. xv. 33. So doth Job, chap. xxviii. 28. And David, Psalm. cxi. 10. So also Prov i. 7 ix. 10. Nothing therefore can be more plain, than that by wisdom we are to understand *the fear of the Lord*, even such a fear of him whereby we avoid whatsoever is offensive to him, and perform whatsoever is required or commanded by him, Prov viii. 13. xvi. 6. For indeed the fear of the Lord in Scripture, is not only now and then, but almost every where, put for the whole duty of man, for that which we call in general godliness: insomuch, that in all the Old Testament, yea, and in the language wherein it was written, as I remember, there is never a word ever used for godliness but יהוה יראת, *the fear of God*, and *the fear of the Lord*, and the like. And in the New Testament, wheresoever the word εὐσέβεια, *godliness*, is used, in the language our Saviour spake, it is always rendered by  *the fear of God*: so that wheresoever you read of the fear of God in Scripture, by it you are to understand not only that particular grace or act whereby we reverence and dread the eternal God, but likewise that excellent habit or disposition of the mind, whereby we are ready to perform universal obedience to all his laws and commands, or if you will, that which in other places of Scripture is called godliness: and

the reason is, because the true fear of God always qualifies and tempers the mind so, that a man dare not but please and obey God in every thing he doth, to the utmost of his knowledge and power.

This therefore is that wisdom and understanding which the Wise-man here means, even such wisdom whereby a man so knows God as to fear him, and so fears God as to honour and obey him in all things. This is that wisdom which is here commended to us by God himself as the most blessed, the most excellent, the most precious, the most profitable, and the most incomparable thing we can ever desire or have, ver. 13, 14, 15, 16. And that we may be assured that there is pleasure as well as profit to be had in knowing and serving God, he further adds, that *her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

Where the next thing to be searched into is, what we are here to understand by the ways and paths of wisdom, or true piety, which are here asserted to be so pleasant and peaceable.

For which we must know first in general, that godliness being the means whereby we may attain eternal salvation by the merits of Jesus Christ, hence it is called *the way of salvation*, Acts xvi. 17 and *the way to life*, Matt. vii. 14. and *the way of God*, Acts xviii. 26. because it is the way wherein God would have us walk, as being chalked out for us by himself in his holy word. And as the habit of godliness in general is called *the way of God*, so are the several acts of piety called his ways too, Deut. viii. 6. x. 12. And as they are called the *ways of God*, so they are termed here *the ways of godliness*, because they are such ways as true godliness prescribes and directs a man to walk in, through the whole course of his life. Thus therefore reading and hearing of the word of God, praying unto him, receiving of his blessed sacraments, meditating upon

him, loving of him, longing for him, trusting on him, rejoicing in him, and obeying him; in being just and faithful, charitable and merciful, kind and loving to one another; and all other acts whatsoever of true grace and virtue, wherein a man truly pious can exercise himself, they are all but the several ways of wisdom or piety, which are here asserted to be not only pleasant and peaceable, but pleasantness and peace itself.

But this I fear many of you may think to be such as several others of Solomon's proverbs seem to be, even a mere riddle or paradox; which, though it may perhaps be true, yet you can hardly believe it to be so, not being able to imagine how so strict and devout a life as true wisdom and holiness requires, should afford such extraordinary peace and pleasure to the soul, as is here asserted to be in it. And therefore to convince you of this great truth, that the performance of these several duties, and the exercise of these several graces which are here called *the ways of wisdom*, doth really afford true peace and pleasure, true comfort and satisfaction to the souls of men: to convince you of this, I say, is the work which this text requires me to undertake, howsoever hard and difficult it may seem to be. And if you will but seriously consider what I shall deliver upon this subject, and weigh it in the balance of right and unbiassed reason, I do not fear but by the blessing and assistance of Almighty God, I shall convince you all effectually of it.

But in order thereunto, you must give me leave to premise two things: first, that the Wise-man here asserts the ways of wisdom to be not only *the ways of pleasantness*, but likewise *the paths of peace*; that is, they are quiet and peaceable, as well as pleasant and delightful to the soul. Some ways may be pleasant, which yet are unsafe and dangerous; others may be safe and without danger, but yet un-

pleasant to such as walk in them. But the ways of wisdom have both those excellent properties, *her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace* : which adds very much to the pleasantness of them ; peace, in the idiom of the Scripture, comprehending under it all manner of safety, welfare, and prosperity that can be desired, which always attending the pleasures and delights of holy actions, must needs make them as pleasant and delightful, as it is possible for actions to be. The other thing I would premise is, that when I speak of pleasure, you must not expect any philosophical definition or description of it : for it is a thing that you may better experience in yourselves, than I am able to express it to you. Neither indeed need I tell you what it is, for you all know well enough when a thing is pleasing to you, and how your minds are affected with it ; which affection of the mind with that which is good, and so pleasing to us, is that which we call pleasure, whereby we rest satisfied in the enjoyment of some either real or seeming good.

But certainly he must be a great stranger to the exercise of true piety and virtue, that is not so affected with it, as to take a great deal of pleasure and delight in it, there being nothing that can afford so much joy and satisfaction to the soul as that doth : which, that I may demonstrate to you, I shall first instance in such common duties, which wisdom or true piety puts men continually upon ; and shew you what extraordinary pleasure they who are real saints take in them.

1. Reading the word of God, is one of those ways of wisdom which wise and good men often walk in ; and could you but see how their hearts are affected whilst they read them, you would need no other argument to persuade you it is a pleasant and delightful work : for the Scriptures are the word, the oracles of God himself ; and therefore, they who are truly

godly, cannot but find extraordinary joy and comfort in reading and consulting of them. For there they meet with the will and pleasure of God revealed to them, and with the glorious properties and perfections of God unveiled before them: there they meet with all the promises which he hath made to mankind in Jesus Christ, yea, with all things whatsoever they desire to know: for here they may learn both how to serve God here, and to enjoy him hereafter, which are the only things a good man desires to know. And they who are truly such, cannot but be strangely affected in the reading of the Scriptures; yea, even transported with the heavenly and divine expressions they meet with there. And that they are so, is plain from the example of David; how sweet, how pleasant, was the word of God to him? Psal. cxix. 103. and xix. 9, 10. and cxix. 14. And every godly man being of the same temper and disposition as David was, he cannot but find as much joy and comfort in the word of God as David did; who therefore describes a good man, by *his delighting*, as he did, *in the law of God*, Psal. i. 2.

2. Praying and praising God, are ways of piety and pleasure too: for by prayer, they who are truly pious converse with God himself, with an humble confidence, that whatsoever they ask in Christ's name they shall receive, which must needs afford them more joy and comfort, than any one is able to conceive but they that have it; especially praising of him being always joined with praying to him, which is so high, so holy, so heavenly a work, so agreeable to the nature of saints, that it cannot but raise their spirits to the highest pitch of joy and pleasure, as it did David's, Psal. lxxiii. 4, 5. Yea, this is the work which the very glorified saints in heaven make their constant business and recreation, Rev. iv. 9, 10, 11

3. Frequenting of the public ordinances, to pre-

sent ourselves together in a solemn and reverend manner before the eternal God, to implore his mercy, to magnify his name, to hear his word, and to perform our homage and devotion : who is able to express the pleasure which the truly pious take in it ? How did David rejoice to go to the house of God ? Psal. cxxii. 1. How did he grieve when by reason of his banishment he was deprived of this mercy ? Psal. xlii. 1, 2, 3, 4. How did he envy the very birds that could go nearer to God's altar than himself ? Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 2, 3, 4. How doth he beg to be restored to his former liberty, that he might freely go to the house of God again ? Psal. xliii. 2, 3. preferring it before all other joys, Psal. lxxxiv. 10. And questionless, all those who are holy as David was, cannot but find the same delight in worshipping and adoring God as he did, they cannot but find these ways of wisdom to be *the ways of pleasantness and peace*.

4. Meditating upon God and Christ, upon heaven, and the glories of the world to come, is a duty no less pleasant than profitable to the saints of God : for by this means they have their conversation always in heaven, there solacing their souls in the contemplation of divine perfections. As the lustful man is delighted with beholding of earthly beauty, and the covetous with his worldly riches, so, and much more, he that is heavenly and godly, must needs be delighted with meditating upon God and heaven, objects agreeable to his temper and constitution ; inso-much, that we may boldly say, that there is no pleasure like to his who always dwells in heaven, conversing with those transcendent beauties, glories, and perfections that are there. This is that which David found so sweet and pleasant to his soul, Psal. civ. 33, 34.

5. Receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper ; this you cannot but acknowledge to be the highest

refreshment that a true saint can ever attain to in this life : for here we eat and drink the mystical body and blood of Christ, feed upon angels' food, the bread of life that came down from heaven, Job vi. 35, 55, 56. Here we sit down with Christ himself at his own table, and have nothing less than all the merits of his death and passions displayed and set before us, which true saints cannot but account to be the best banquet, the most pleasant feast that they ever were or can be invited to in this world. And if the duties which wisdom requires to be performed, afford so much comfort and delight to them that duly perform them, what then shall we think of the pleasures which a good man taketh in the exercise of all true grace and virtue ? What shall we think of it ? Why, that it is certainly far greater than we are able to think it, for no man can conceive it but he that hath it. But that you may understand something of it, I desire you to consider the true nature of piety ; that it consisteth in the right temper and disposition of the mind, reducing all its powers and faculties into their proper frame and constitution ; so that it may be justly termed the health and soundness of the soul, as all vices are diseases and distempers in it. And therefore as an healthful and sound body is not only free from pains and aches, but all its natural motions are pleasing and delightful to it ; so is it with the pious soul, all pious and virtuous actions being agreeable to its nature, the exerting of them cannot but be very grateful and pleasant unto it. As when such a soul exerciseth itself in loving of God, and longing after him, in trusting on him, and rejoicing in him, and the like ; such acts as these are the natural products of that grace and virtue which is sown in the heart : so that the man would do violence to his renewed nature, if he should not exert them ; and therefore he cannot but take extraordinary delight in the exerting or acting of them.

The same may be said of all other graces and virtues whatsoever, as faith, humility, self-denial, temperance, patience, truth, faithfulness, justice, meekness, charity, and whatsoever else it is that the hearts and lives of true saints are adorned withal: for such acts as these flowing naturally from a pious soul, renewed and assisted always by the grace of God, they cannot but always carry a secret kind of pleasure and delight along with them, which none can perceive, much less partake of, but the soul from whence they flow

But besides this agreeableness that there is betwixt all acts of piety and pious souls, he that sincerely performeth those duties, and exerciseth those graces which God requires, thereby enjoys peace of conscience, even unspeakable joy and satisfaction in his mind, arising from the sense and consideration that he hath done his duty, and so that God is pleased with him: for the apprehension of God's love and favour is certainly the greatest pleasure and happiness that men or angels are capable of. But according to our obedience to God's laws, so generally is our sense of his love to us; if we have sincerely endeavoured to observe whatsoever he hath commanded, we have just grounds to hope, for Christ's sake, he will accept of us, and is well pleased with us; which must needs affect us with extraordinary joy and comfort, as it did St. Paul, 2 Cor. i. 12. And this is that which none of you but may often experience in yourselves: for when you have been conscious to yourselves of some wilful and notorious sin, have not your consciences often flown in your faces, and raised storms and tempests in your breasts, ready to sink you every moment into horror and despair? And so also on the other side, when you have faithfully discharged your duties, and kept your consciences void of offence towards God and man, have you not then found your consciences clear, your minds serene, and your whole souls transported into

pleasure and satisfaction, at the apprehension and remembrance of it? I know you have, for so it is with them that walk only by the light of nature, Rom. ii. 14, 15. And if it be so with them, how much more with such as are guided by the light of the Gospel, and assisted with the principles of true grace? Their blessed souls must needs be affected with extraordinary joy and comfort at the sense of their serving and pleasing God; especially considering that every pious man hath firm and sure ground whereupon to build the hopes of his acceptance with God, even the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, which he stedfastly believes in, and relies continually upon, as having the word of God himself for it, that what he sincerely endeavours to do, is acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 5. And whosoever believes this, as be sure every pious man doth, he cannot but take unspeakable delight in obeying God, because he believeth that for Christ's sake God is pleased with what he doth, and accepts of it as well as if it was every way as perfect and exact as the law itself requires it should be; which is certainly so great, so high a comfort, that they who experience it in themselves, can never be able to express it to others, 1 Pet. i. 8.

Thus therefore you see what peace and pleasure there is in the ways of wisdom, even in the several acts of piety, which they who are truly godly, continually exercise themselves in. The last thing I promised to shew you is, wherein the pleasures which they enjoy, who constantly serve and obey God, do far exceed all the sensual delights of this world; wherein I shall endeavour to demonstrate to you, that they who devote themselves wholly to the service of God, live the most pleasant and comfortable lives of any men in the world; yea, that they are the only men that know what pleasure and comfort means, and by consequence, that the

ways of wisdom are not only the ways of pleasantness, but the only ways of pleasantness that it is possible for any of you to walk in.

For first of all, other pleasures only tickle the senses, and delight the fancies of men, and so have no other being or existence in the world, but what our deluded imaginations give them : abstract your fancy from all things here below, and what will then become of your pleasure in them ? How soon will it vanish into smoke and vapours, yea, into vanity and vexation of spirit ? Think gold dirt, and it is so ; think the pomp and glory of this world to be a mere dream and shadow, and it is so ; think lust and luxury, drunkenness and gluttony, to be beastly and brutish fooleries, and they are so : for those are things that fools and madmen, yea, the brute beasts themselves, take as much seeming pleasure in, as the soberest and learnedest men can do ; and therefore we should never fancy any thing of pleasure in such things as these are, were not our imaginations so fearfully corrupted and depraved, as to present every thing in a wrong shape, and under false colours to us : for we are all men, rational creatures, made after the image of God, endowed with spiritual and immortal souls, as well as with frail and corruptible bodies ; and therefore it cannot in reason be imagined but that far other and higher delights were designed for us, than such as brute beasts themselves partake of as well as we.

But the pleasures which the saints enjoy are quite of another nature ; they are not seated in the body or senses, but the soul itself is the subject of them ; and all its powers and faculties are affected and delighted with them. And therefore our Saviour, to distinguish them from all other pleasures, calls them the rest or happiness of our souls, Matt. xi. 28, 29. The things of this world may something ease and refresh our bodies, but they cannot reach the soul

at all, so as to afford it any thing of comfort and satisfaction; and therefore it was a foolish thing for the rich man in the Gospel to say to his soul, *Take thine ease*, because his worldly goods were increased, as you see he did, Luke xii. 17, 18, 19. But you know who called him fool for his pains, even no less a person than the great God himself, ver. 20. He was a fool indeed that thought his earthly riches could give ease to his soul; no, none but Christ can ever do that, neither doth he ever do it to any but the truly pious. They may say indeed to their souls, Souls, take your ease, for you have goods, real, spiritual, and eternal goods, laid up for you, not only for many years, but for ever and ever. But this is more than any one else can say, and therefore they must be acknowledged to be the only persons that enjoy true peace and pleasure in the world, such peace and pleasure as becomes a man, a Christian, a saint, to solace and delight himself continually in, the soul itself being the proper and immediate subject of it, as David himself found, Psal. xciv. 29.

2. As the pleasures which arise from piety exceed all others in the subject, so do they in the object too; whatsoever sensitive pleasures men enjoy, they are no more, nor greater, nor better than what the silly creatures upon earth can afford them; they look no higher than this lower world, and if they can make a shift to pick up something that looks like pleasure in it, they are beholden to the very inanimate and senseless creatures for it. Thus the covetous man takes pleasure in refined dirt, the epicure in meats and drinks, the vain-glorious man in empty titles of honour, and every one, but he that is sincerely pious, can find no other pleasure in the world but what he is forced to fetch from sensible and terrestrial objects, as being the only things that he converseth with, although they were never intended to make men happy.

But it is not so with the sons of wisdom, with those who are born again, and so become the children of the Most High. They feed not like swine upon the husks of this lower world, but have their heads and hearts continually taken up with the contemplation and enjoyment of the chiefest good, the eternal God himself; or, at least, with longing and thirsting after him, and with rejoicing at every intimation that they have of his love and kindness to them: so that he that is the only centre of all perfections, is the only object of their joy and pleasure. *The light of his countenance*, that is, the manifestation of his grace and mercy to them, is the only good that they desire or rejoice in, Psal. iv. 6, 7. Hence such as are truly wise and godly, disdaining to converse with nothing else but dirt and clay, as silly mortals upon earth do, *their conversation is in heaven*, Phil. iii. 20. There are all the wealth and treasures, the joys and pleasures that are the objects of their desires; and therefore their thoughts and affections are always there, Col. iii. 2. And as there is nothing upon earth, so neither is there any thing in heaven but God, which they desire or rejoice in, Psal. lxxiii. 25. All the world, the whole creation, is nothing to a godly man; the eternal God, the Creator himself, is the portion of their cup and the lot of their inheritance: he is their hope and help, their joy and desire, their light and love, their strength and tower, their wealth and riches, their sun, their shield, and their exceeding great reward; he is their all, their more than all, their God. And seeing this the supreme and universal Being of the world is the only object of a saint's delight, the ways of wisdom must needs be acknowledged to surpass all other ways in pleasantness and peace, as much as heaven doth earth, and the infinite Creator all finite creatures.

3. The pleasures which saints enjoy exceed all others in their properties: for,

1. They are true and solid, pure and unmixed pleasures; which cannot be said of the sensual delights of this world, which are always ushered in, attended, and followed with grief and troubles; they are no pleasures until some preceding pain or sorrow makes them so: and as they begin, so they go on and end with sadness, as Solomon himself, that made as much trial of them as ever man did, found by his own experience, and therefore hath expressly asserted it, Prov. xiv. 13. But it is not so with the godly; their joys are real and substantial, pure and sincere joys, without any mixture or alloy of trouble with them, Prov. x. 22. Their joys depend not upon the constitution of their bodies, but the right disposition of their minds, which being always preserved in a due temper, their pleasures are not subject to such changes and vicissitudes as others are, but their hearts are always fixed, trusting upon God, Psal. cxii. 7. Hence also,

2. They are firm and constant pleasures, not like the uncertain delights of sinful men, which ebb and flow with the stream of worldly prosperity, and depend altogether upon the inconstant smiles of fortune in this world: they are merry and jolly while they prosper, but let them be but deprived of any part of their estates, crossed in their relations or designs, or howsoever, let them but be laid upon a sick bed, and then all their pleasure is gone, nothing they have can afford them any comfort or relief, but their thoughts trouble them, and every thing seems sad and sorrowful to them. No, the pleasures of piety are not such as these; they are not taken from any sublunary objects, and therefore do not increase or wane with them: but the good man is as cheerful when the world frowns as when it smiles upon him; howsoever the world goes with him, it is all one to him, he is still the same; though he lose all things here below, he loseth nothing of his joy; for that was

placed only upon God before, and so it is still, Hab. iii. 17. So that in the midst of all his thoughts within him, the comforts of God still rejoice and delight his soul, Psal. xciv. 19. Yea, though he be upon his sick, his death-bed, his comfort still remains; his sickness cannot be so painful and tormenting to his body, but the testimony of a good conscience is still as pleasing and supporting to his soul, Isa. xxxviii. 3.

3. The pleasures of the righteous are full and satisfying. The things of this world are all so vain and empty, that whatsoever men fancy, they can never be satisfied with them, Eccles. i. 8. And the reason is, because the soul is capable of more than all this world; and therefore his desires being as large as his capacities, can never be satisfied with any thing, or all things in it: but the godly man drinks continually at the fountain head: the inexhaustible fountain of all true joy and happiness, God himself, is the only object of his delight, in whom he cannot but rest fully satisfied, being not able to desire more than he hath in him, Psal. xvii. 15. Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3.

4. The pleasures of this world are but sensual and brutish, no better than the very beasts themselves enjoy as well as you: but the joys of the godly are angelical and divine; such joys as the cherubims and seraphims, the angels and archangels enjoy in heaven; yea, such as God himself enjoys: for what does he rejoice in but himself, and what do they rejoice in but only him? Phil. iv. 4. And therefore, if you would know what joys there are in heaven, you must look into a saint's breast, there you may see them represented as clearly as they can be in this world; but you cannot read or understand them, unless yourselves be the saints ye look into.

5. The pleasures of this life, they are at the best but the pleasures of this life; when this life is ended

you must leave them all, so as never to return to them again; but instead of present pleasures and delights, you will have grief and sorrow, pain and torment, misery and desolation for evermore: but it is not so with the joys of saints; they are begun in this life, and perfected in the life to come, so as to continue in their lustre and beauty, in their height and perfection unto all eternity, Psal. xvi. 11. Neither will they only last for ever, but that the saints shall know and be assured of too, which will be a great addition to them; for the very thoughts of losing those pleasures, as you must lose yours, would damp all the comfort they take in them: but no fear of that; no, they are not such pleasures as time can consume, or eternity itself diminish; but he that enjoys them once, will be certain to enjoy them for ever.

Thus now you see that the ways of wisdom are not only the ways of pleasantness, but of such pleasantness that no other pleasures in the world can either surpass or equalize it. From whence observe,

1. The great mistakes that are in the world concerning piety, as if it was a melancholy and disconsolate course of life; whereas it is plain, that no persons in the world enjoy such pleasures as the godly do, nay, none enjoy any true pleasure at all but they: they are the only spiritual Dives's that fare deliciously every day, the rest of mankind being altogether unacquainted with true joy and comfort, true peace and pleasure, because they walk not in the ways of wisdom.

2. Hence see the folly and madness of sinful men, who embrace the shadow for the substance, and take up with seeming instead of real joys: they are always thirsting after pleasure, but can never be satisfied with it, until they be sanctified and made truly holy. And therefore as ever you desire to lead cheerful and comfortable, pleasant and happy lives,

either in this world, or that which is to come, without any more ado, consecrate yourselves to God, and make it your business to please him ; walk continually in the ways of wisdom, performing your duty both to God and man : and then you will have pleasure indeed ; such pleasure as the world can neither give nor take from you ; such pleasure as will refresh your minds, comfort your hearts, support your spirits, rejoice your souls in all conditions, and so make you happy both now and for ever.

SERMON CL.

THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING HOLY.

1 TIM. iv. 8.

For bodily exercise profiteth little : but godliness is profitable unto all things.

WELL might the prophet say, *The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; who can know it ?* For who ever yet could fathom the bottom of his own heart ; or thoroughly understand what himself would have ? Who ever yet was acquainted with all the concavities and secret recesses that are in his own breast, so as really to know himself ? Or who ever yet could say, that his heart was faithful to him, or that he was faithful to himself ? Certainly very few, if ever any ; as might easily be demonstrated from the strange paradoxical and self-contradicting actions that men do generally commit. They believe there is a God, and yet they will not strive to serve him ; they look for a future judgment, and yet they will not prepare for it ; they know there is a hell to punish sinners, and yet they will be sinners still ; they hope to go to heaven when they die, and yet will not look after it while they live ; they condemn sin, and yet they will commit it ; they commend holiness, and yet they will not practise it : nay, for all that men desire to be happy, and know there is no other way to be so but by being holy, yet it is the hardest matter in the world

to persuade them to be or to live holy : insomuch that although we come unto you in the name of God, exhort, solicit, advise, and charge you, time after time, to devote yourselves, and all you have, to the service and honour of Almighty God ; and although you cannot but in your consciences acknowledge, that it is both your duty and interest to do so, yet you will not be prevailed upon to do it, only because you will not : so desperately wicked, deceitful, and perverse is the heart of man become, that nothing but Omnipotence itself is able to affect or move it.

Howsoever, seeing it is by the ministry of his word, that God is pleased to draw off your hearts from sin, and to incline them effectually to himself ; whether you will be faithful to yourselves or no, we are bound to be faithful to you, and to use all means imaginable, which, by the blessing and assistance of Almighty God, may any ways conduce to the making you in love with piety, and seriously to endeavour after the practice of it. And amongst the many means that may be used to this end, I know none more probable to effect it, than to represent holiness to you under the notion of such things as you are most apt to be taken withal. But there are three things especially which all mankind are affected with, and very much desire, pleasures, honours, and profit. Not to insist upon the other now, profit is a thing that all look after ; for none would be poor that can be rich, and how much soever a man hath, he is still willing, if not desirous, to have more. This is that which makes some dig into the bowels of the earth, and others to dive into the bottom of the sea to find it. This is that which keeps some at home, and sends others abroad to look after it. This is that which confines some to their shops, and makes others trudge about the world, encompassing both sea and land to search for it. Indeed profit is the universal engine of the world, that draws men's hearts

and affections, yea, both their souls and bodies, which way soever it turns. Whatsoever it is wherein any thing of gain or advantage is to be had, no man but would willingly be a sharer in it : insomuch that could I direct you to a way wherein you might all infallibly double your estates in this world, I dare say, there is none of you but would thankfully embrace the motion, and prosecute it with all your might and main ; and that by reason of the natural desire that is in all mankind of having and enjoying much. And verily, although I cannot pretend to be so cunning and ingenious as yourselves are, to find out ways how to increase your temporal estates, and to manage them for the best advantage in this world ; yet I dare assure and promise you, in the presence of Almighty God, that I can direct you to such a course of life as will be really profitable and advantageous for you ; and that is, to devote yourselves wholly to the service and honour of God, or to live godly and religious lives, by which you may certainly get not only much more than you have, but as much as you can possibly desire. For this way of living would bring you in a constant income of true and lasting riches ; there being nothing that you can in reason or justice desire, but by this means you may undoubtedly gain it to yourselves. But because you may not think me a competent judge in matters of gain or profit, I shall wave my own judgment in the case, and appeal to him, whose judgment is beyond exception, even to the all-wise God himself, who cannot but be acknowledged to understand infinitely better than you and I do, what is and what is not good and profitable for us. And if you consult his judgment and opinion concerning it, you need not go far to find it ; for he hath plainly and expressly declared it to you, by his holy apostle, in the words I have now read, *for bodily exercise*, &c. which words did you but clearly understand, and firmly believe what

is contained in them, you would not need any other arguments to persuade you to use the best of your endeavours after godliness. And therefore I shall endeavour to give you the full meaning and purport of them; and shew you likewise what just grounds you have really and firmly to believe the truth asserted in them.

Here therefore, first, by bodily exercise we are to understand such exercises of the body as are wont to be undertaken by some upon a religious account, as abstinence from some kinds of meats, from wines, from marriage, and the like; wherein many in the primitive, yea, even in the apostolic times, as well as now, placed a great part of their religion, for it is of such kind of bodily exercises that the apostle is here treating, ver. 1, 2, 3, 4. Now such bodily exercise, if it be not observed upon right grounds, and kept within its proper limits, as, if meats be abstained from as unlawful, and marriage as in itself detestable, as some of old did, then be sure it becomes both sinful and dangerous, as the apostle intimates, Col. ii. 22. But if it be undertaken only as an act of self-denial, out of a desire to keep the body under, and to make no provision for the flesh, then it may be somewhat acceptable unto God, as carrying along with it a shew of piety, Col. ii. 23. And therefore, such kind of bodily exercise may be, yea is, *ὠφέλιμος πρὸς ὀλίγον*, *profitable for a little*, or, as we here render it, *it profiteth little*, that is, there is something of profit in it, at least for some time, as some expound the words, *πρὸς ὀλίγον*, *for a little time*; a notable instance whereof we have in Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 27, 28, 29.

But whatsoever profit we may reap from such bodily exercises, be sure it is little or nothing in comparison of the great advantages which accrue unto us by real and universal piety: *for bodily exercise*, saith he, *profiteth little, but godliness is profitable for all things*; that is, *ὠφέλιμος πρὸς ὀλίγον*, this *πρὸς πάντα*, *that*

is profitable for some things, this for all things whatsoever ; which you will all acknowledge to be a large encomium of godliness, and that which must needs render it very acceptable unto all men, all men being ready to catch at every thing that will bring them in any profit, much more surely at that which is profitable for all things : insomuch that I am willing to persuade myself, that hearing of these words you cannot but be very desirous to know both what this godliness is, which is here asserted to be so profitable a thing, and likewise how it appears to be so ; both which I shall endeavour to explain unto you.

As for the first, what godliness is : in few terms, it is nothing else but the rectitude, or right temperament and disposition of the whole man, every faculty of the soul, and member of the body, being reduced into its primitive conformity to the laws and commands of God : so that as the sun, moon, and stars, and all other inanimate creatures, keep the stations, observe the motions, and act according to the rules which were at first prescribed them ; so he that is truly godly, all his thoughts, his words, and actions, move regularly, according to the will of the first mover, the supreme Being of the world, still keeping themselves within the bounds that he hath set, and discharging the several offices and duties which he that made them did at first enjoin them. And therefore it doth not exert and manifest itself only in some few particular acts of our life, but in the devotion of ourselves, and our lives, wholly unto him in whom we live. To this agrees the description which St. Basil gives of holiness or sanctification, *Ἀγιασμός ἐστὶ τὸ ἀνακεῖν θαι τῷ ἁγίῳ Θεῷ ἐξ ὁλοκλήρου*, *Holiness is the devoting of ourselves wholly to the most holy God*, sincerely studying and endeavouring at all times to do those things which are pleasing and acceptable unto him ; which notion of godliness is imported also in

the word here used by the Holy Ghost for it: for what we render godliness, in the original is εὐσέβεια, which properly signifies the right worshipping of God, which consisteth principally in testifying our acknowledgment of his power and authority over us, by conforming our lives and actions wholly to his revealed will and pleasure. And hence it is too that we call it godliness, or likeness to God, because by this means we are in our capacity and degree, *holy as he is holy, in all manner of conversation.* Therefore is that godliness which the apostle here speaks of, even such an excellent temper and constitution of the mind, whereby we serve and honour, please and obey God to the utmost of our power, in every thing we set our hands, our heads, or hearts about. This is that godliness which is here said to be profitable for all things; which is the next thing to be considered.

What it is for a thing to be profitable, I need not tell you; for you all understand well enough that you reckon a thing to be profitable, when it conduceth or helpeth towards your getting something that is good and advantageous for you; in which sense godliness is here said to be profitable, not only for some, or many, or most, but for all things whatsoever; because it is the way whereby we may attain to all things whatsoever that are or can be necessary, convenient, or any ways good for us; so that as your trades and callings in the world are profitable to many of you, as to some things, because they bring you in much worldly gain or profit, the thing you so much covet; so godliness is profitable for all things, because by it you may gain all things you can in reason desire or wish for, either in this life or that which is to come: for, indeed, all good things whatsoever are promised to it, which is the reason the apostle here brings for this his assertion,

that *godliness is profitable for all things*, because it hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Where we may observe, first, the strong foundation that the apostle lays his assertion upon, grounding it upon nothing less than the promise of God, which is certainly not only the surest, but the only ground that we either have, or can have, to believe that any thing shall be profitable to us, it being the promise of Omnipotence itself, of him that rules and disposeth of all things in the world; he hath said and promised that godliness shall be profitable to you, but not that any thing else shall be so: he never promised you that you should thrive in your trades or callings: he never promised you that your projects and designs in the world should prove successful; or that the care and pains you take should stand you in any stead; if it doth, it is more than you could promise yourselves, for it is more than God ever promised to you: but he hath promised all good things whatsoever can be desired to godliness, yea, and hath sealed his promise too with the blood of his Son, 2 Cor. i. 20. And the promises he hath made to it are both for this life and that which is to come, and so godliness is profitable for all things in both.

1. As for this life. It is certain that godliness answers all the concerns of it, and is profitable to all things in it. But because this is a thing that you will not be easily persuaded of, I shall further explain and demonstrate it to you, and prove that godliness, even in this life, is not only more profitable than any thing else, but itself is profitable to all things; for you will all grant me, that that which conduceth to the getting of estates before you have them, to the keeping of them when you have got them, to the enjoyment of them while you keep them, and to the improvement of them while you

enjoy them; and will profit you also in all things else wherein your estates can be no way serviceable to you; you will all grant, I say, that this must needs be profitable unto all things; but such is godliness: for,

1. It is profitable as to the getting of estates in this life, such estates especially as are most convenient and necessary for every man to have; for it secures to a man a sufficient maintenance and subsistence in this life, as firmly as truth and omnipotence itself can do it, Matt. vi. 33. So that he that takes care to please and obey God, need take care of nothing else, for God himself will take care of all things else for him. And besides that, godliness hath the blessing of God always attending it, which is the only thing that maketh rich, Prov x. 22. And that God's blessing shall always go along with godliness, is expressly promised by God himself, Deut. xxviii. 1, 2, 3, 4. So that he that is godly is sure to be provided for; he is sure to have as much in this world as is good and advantageous for him, which is far more than any other man either is, or can be. Nay, godliness in itself conduceth much to the getting wealth and riches even in this life, because it brings a man into that credit and repute in the world, that all men will strive to deal with him, who deals truly and faithfully with all men, as be sure every godly man doth. Howsoever, this is certain, that they who are truly godly shall never want any good thing, for God himself hath passed his word for that, Psal. xxxiv. 9, 10. lxxxiv. 11. and therefore, so far as any thing in this world is good for them, they are sure to have it: so that godliness is profitable for the getting of all the real good, or good things of this life.

2. So it is too for the keeping of them when gotten, not only because it always moderates a man's affections, so that he will be sure to live within the compass of his estate, and not squander it away upon lust and luxury, Luke xv. 13, 14. but likewise, be-

cause God himself hath engaged to provide for him, and therefore to preserve what he hath given him for that purpose, which he certainly will do for all that trust in him, Psal. xxxvii. 3, 23, 24, 25. Dan. vi. 23. Jer. xxxix. 17, 18.

3. Godliness conduceth much also to the right enjoyment of what we have. A wicked man often wants what he hath, Eccles. vi. 2. whereas a good man always enjoys what he hath, Eccles. v. 18, 19. and oftentimes what he hath not too, taking a great deal of pleasure and contentment, not only in his own, but in others' estates too, rejoicing in the goodness of God, that is so bountiful to others as well as himself, Rom. xii. 15.

4. And if you speak of improving your estates, nothing doubtless conduceth so much to that as godliness; for it will teach you how to manage every thing you have for the best advantage: it will teach you how to *make friends of the unrighteous mammon*, Luke xvi. 9. how to return your estates into the other world, Matt. vi. 20. and how, even in this life, to receive an hundred for one, (Job iii. compared with Job xlii. 12. he had two for one,) interest for all you have, Matt. xix. 29. Mark x. 30. And therefore godliness must needs be acknowledged to be a very profitable thing indeed.

5. Where riches can stand you in no stead at all, there too godliness will be profitable to you: for riches profit not in the day of wrath, but so doth godliness, Prov. xi. 4. Ezek. vii. 19. Psal. xlix. 16, 17. Riches cannot profit you when you come to lie upon your death-bed, but so can godliness, Isa. xxxviii. 1, 2, 3. Riches while you have them cannot afford any contentment or satisfaction to you, but the more you have of them, the more thirsty you will still be after them: but godliness always breeds contempt, and so becomes great gain, 1 Tim. vi. 6. Riches can never free your hearts from cares and fears, but

so doth godliness ; it makes a man take no thought for this life, Matt. vi. 25. It makes a man repose his trust wholly upon God, and to depend on him for all things necessary both for life and godliness ; so that all things considered, the good man is the only rich man even in this life : he hath all things he desires, for he desires nothing but what he hath : though he may want something which others have, be sure he wants nothing that is good for him ; for he hath one thing which is not only better than all things else, but profitable for all things too, even true godliness, which whosoever is endowed with, hath all things secured to him, both in this life, and that which is to come.

Thus therefore, had we nothing else to mind but the concerns and affairs of this life, yet godliness must needs be acknowledged to be the most profitable and beneficial way of living that any one can possibly take to, as having the promise of all good things even for this life, both made and confirmed to it by him that cannot lie. Indeed, though there was no such thing as a promise made unto it, yet godliness, even of itself, in its own nature, may justly be accounted not only profitable, but profit itself, the greatest gain, the surest riches, the most real wealth that even in this life we can ever be possessed of : for it keeps a man's mind continually in such an excellent frame and temper, that doth not only answer all the ends of other riches, but makes him infinitely more happy than all the riches in this world can do : for it raises a man's thoughts and affections so far above the world, that he is never concerned or affected with any thing that happens in it to the grief and disturbance of others ; but whatsoever storms and tempests arise without him, he hath still calmness and tranquillity, peace and assured confidence within. Hence it is that God himself gives the name of riches to the several acts of holiness :

for the godly man is said to be *rich towards God*, Luke xii. 2 for he is *rich in faith*, James ii. 5. and *rich in good works*, 1 Tim. vi. 18. So he may be said to be rich in love towards God, rich in charity, rich in sobriety, rich in heavenly-mindedness, rich in humility, rich in all true grace and virtue whatsoever. These are the true riches indeed; and let me have such riches as these are, and do you take the riches of this world: I will assure you I shall never envy you for them, but rather pity you as poor and beggarly creatures, naked and destitute of every thing that is really good for you, and necessary to make you happy; whereas he that is truly godly, is certainly as happy as it is possible for a creature to be in this world, and all because he is godly: so that should we look no farther than this life, godliness must needs be acknowledged to be profitable for all things in it.

But why do I speak so much of this short, this transient, this uncertain life we lead in this world, when godliness hath the promise not only of this life, but likewise of that which is to come, which as far exceeds this life as light doth darkness, or heaven earth: for here by the life to come, we are to understand all the joys and glories of heaven, which are promised to true godliness or piety, as is plain from the whole tenour both of the Law and Gospel; yea, so plain, that I need not undertake to prove it to you, there being none of you, I am confident, that doubt of it; but that if you be godly here, you shall live in heaven, and be happy for ever. But the principal thing I am here to do, is to possess you with such a sense of the joys of heaven, and of the excellency of that happiness which is there promised to the godly, that you may all for the future be fully persuaded of this great truth, that you will gain infinitely more by being godly, than you can by any other way of living whatsoever; or that the

profit which by the mercies of God, and the merits of Jesus Christ, you will receive, if you be truly pious, doth far exceed all the wealth and riches which you can ever attain to in this life : which I shall endeavour to do by comparing the riches which the godly enjoy in the life to come, with those which you have, or labour for in this ; or rather by shewing that there is no comparison at all betwixt them. For,

First, the profit which we shall receive by godliness is true and real, which cannot be said of the wealth and riches of this world, which have no real being in themselves, nor any other existence, but what they receive from the delusion of men's distracted fancies : for gold and silver, for example, are no further riches than as they are thought to be so ; and were not our thoughts and imaginations corrupted and deceived, we should never have put the name of riches upon them ; as you may easily gather from the apprehensions that glorified saints and angels have of them : for their judgments and opinions of things being always true and perfect, they can find nothing of real profit or excellency in one piece of dirt more than in another, although it may shine a little more gloriously in the eyes of deluded mortals. Hence our Saviour himself makes earthly riches to have no other subsistence but only in men's thoughts or fancies, Luke viii. 10. Yea, Solomon makes them to have no being at all, Prov. xxiii. 5. Not as if those things which are accounted riches had no real existence in themselves, but that they have no existence at all in the proper notion of riches, or they are not riches properly so called, but are only thought or fancied to be so by deluded mortals, who give the name of riches to houses, and lands, and money, and such like things, which cannot in themselves profit, or do them any good ; and therefore are very falsely called riches or goods : and

yet these are all the riches that all your care and pains, your cunning and industry for this world can bring you

But now the profit that occurs by godliness is quite of another nature ; it is real profit, true wealth, substantial riches indeed, such as make the owners rich in the eye of angels, yea, of God himself : for godliness entitles a man to every thing imaginable that can any ways conduce to make him happy ; it gains an interest in God, and in all the perfections of the divine nature, an interest in Christ, and in all the merits of his death and passion, an interest in the Holy Ghost, and in all the graces and comforts that flow from him : what is, if this be not, true profit indeed, thus to be interested in him who is all things in himself ? What are all the riches of this world, if compared with these ? What if you can say, such houses are my houses, such lands are my lands, such wares, such money, or such bonds are mine ? What is this to a man that can say, God is mine, his mercies are mine to pardon me, his wisdom is mine to direct me, his power is mine to protect me, his grace is mine to make me holy, and all his perfections are mine to make me happy, Psal. cxliv. 15. for he is my God ? Of such a one I would say, behold a rich man indeed ; one that hath thriven so well in the world, that he hath got more than the whole world itself is able to afford him ; one that wants nothing, nothing that is necessary, nothing that is good, nothing that is or can be any ways profitable or advantageous for him, because he hath and enjoys God, in whom all things desirable are concentrated. Yet thus rich and wealthy is every truly good and godly man ; he is entitled to all these glorious things even in this life, and in the life to come, and hath actual possession of them, and all because he is a godly man, one that fears God, and keeps his commandments, and believes in Jesus Christ for pardon and

acceptance, according to the tenour and purport of the Gospel ; and therefore they who are truly godly, must needs be acknowledged not only to be rich men, but to be the only rich men in the world, in comparison of whom no one else can be called rich, whatsoever outward enjoyments he may possess : for theirs are real and substantial riches, his nothing but dreams and fancies, clouds and shadows, the mere chimeras of his own distracted brain.

Secondly, the profit that comes by godliness is full and satisfying, which the riches of this world are not ; for they are not only vain and empty, but even vanity and emptiness itself : so Solomon, you know, calls all things here below, Eccles. i. 2. And who ever yet was satisfied with vanity ? No, no surely ; satisfaction is a thing that this world never did, nor can afford to a rational soul, which is able to desire infinitely more than all things in this world, and therefore we may be confident that nothing in this world is able to satisfy its desires : nay, it is to be observed that the things of this world are so far from satisfying our desires, that the more we have of them, the less we are generally satisfied with them ; but the more we have, the more we crave, our desires still running *in infinitum*, and by consequence never resting satisfied until we come to the enjoyment of the infinite God, which we can never come to without godliness, which is the only way that leads to the enjoyment of this infinite good, in whom alone our infinite desires can be ever satisfied : for godliness hath the promise not only of this, but also of the life to come, which consisteth wholly in the vision and fruition of God, the centre wherein all infinite perfections meet ; and therefore it is profitable for the obtaining of such riches, more than which it is impossible for us to desire ; which therefore whosoever hath, his desires cannot but be fully terminated, and his soul rest fully satisfied in what he hath. But who-

soever is truly godly, is thus fully rich ; not in silver or gold, not in houses or lands, but in God himself, the chiefest, the infinite, the all, the only good, *in whose presence is fulness of joy*, Psal. xvi. 11 inso-much that though all things in this world are not able to fill and satisfy one soul, he of himself is able to fill and satisfy all the souls in the whole world, as he will do those who are truly godly in the life to come, Psal. xvii. 15. Oh the glory, the happiness, the riches of a glorified saint ! How full, how excellent, how infinite is the wealth that he hath gotten by being holy, in and through the merits of Jesus Christ ! seeing he hath as much, not only as he doth, but as he can desire, yea, and infinitely more too ; the riches that he enjoys as far exceeding his desires, as the wealth of this world comes short of ours. How then are we able to forbear breaking forth into that pathetic expression, Psal. xlii. 1.

Thirdly, the riches which godliness in and through Christ produceth, are sure and constant ; they are not like the riches of this world, which make themselves wings and fly away, Prov. xxiii. 5. They do not ebb and flow as all those sublunary riches do, which never continue in one stay ; but he that is rich to-day, may be as poor to-morrow ; and he that is poor to-day, may be as rich to-morrow, and as poor again the day following, so uncertain and inconstant are all things here below : but so are not the riches that are above ; they never fail nor diminish in the least : no, there are no bankrupts in heaven ; he that is once admitted a citizen of the New Jerusalem, there is no fear of his ever breaking, nor of his sustaining any losses or crosses either by sea or land ; for all things are made as sure and firm to him as Omnipotence itself could make them : neither have those blessed souls any mixture of grief or trouble in the bliss and happiness they there enjoy, Rev. xxi. 4. They are never interrupted or hindered in

the enjoyment of what they have, but they constantly enjoy their spiritual estates with joy and satisfaction to the full ; neither do they only enjoy them fully when they have them, but they always have them fully to enjoy

Fourthly, and that is the fourth thing wherein the profit that ariseth from godliness, infinitely surpasseth all the riches of this life, and so are more uncertain than life itself ; for you are never sure of them while you live, and you are sure to part with them when you die, Luke xii. 20. Thus the rich man that fared sumptuously every day, when he is once dead, the next news we hear of him is, that the man is in hell, and hath not so much as a drop of water to cool his inflamed tongue, Luke xvi. 19, 20, 24. How many such Dives's are there in the world, who, whilst they are here, are accounted rich and wealthy, or, to speak in your own dialect, able men, but when they go out of the world, they leave all they have behind them, which others presently fall a scrambling for, whilst themselves are ingulphed in misery and torment, no way able to help themselves. But it is not so with those that are rich towards God : as their estates will never be taken from them, so neither will they be taken from their estates. No, no fear of that, once in hell, and for ever in hell, and once in heaven, and for ever in heaven. There are no leases for any terms of years there ; every thing they have, as what have they not, is firmly settled upon them for ever ; every one hath his life in his estate, and that *an immortal and an eternal life*, Matt xxv. 46. Every one hath *an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. i. 4. Every one hath his mansion house, and that *eternal in the heavens*, 2 Cor. v. 1. Every one hath *his full of pleasures, and that for evermore*, Psal. xvi. 11. So infinitely doth the profit that comes by godliness exceed the fading and impertinent riches of this transient world.

But should I undertake to discourse so fully upon this subject, as to shew you every thing wherein the wealth of the godly surpasseth all other riches, my discourse must be like the subject, infinite and eternal. And therefore I shall instance only in one more particular wherein the extraordinary profitableness of godliness may be easily seen, and that is, that by it a man may certainly and infallibly attain to the riches we have now been speaking of; which is infinitely more than can be said of the things of this life: for it is possible for a man to use all the art and cunning that ever man used to get earthly wealth and riches, and yet go without it when all is done. This many have found by their own experience, who could never attain to any considerable estate, do what they could, but after all their care and pains, and trouble, they have still been as poor and indigent as ever. But it is not so with heavenly riches, which godliness is profitable for; for never a soul of you but may most certainly attain to them, that will but use the best of his endeavours to live in all godliness and honesty: not by any virtue that is in godliness itself, as if that could merit such transcendent riches as these are, but by reason of the promise which is made to it, both for this life and that which is to come; which promise being made by God himself, who cannot lie, it cannot but be faithfully and exactly performed, especially considering that it is sealed and confirmed too by the blood of Jesus, who came into the world and died on purpose that they who believe and obey him, and so are godly persons, *might have everlasting life*, John iii. 11, 15, 16. Heb. vii. 25. 1 John v. 10, 11. So that we have the word, the testimony, the word of God himself, that if we be truly godly, we shall have eternal life in Jesus Christ; from whence we may confidently assert, that no true saint ever missed of heaven, or that true godliness never yet was, or never can be, unsuccessful

or unprofitable to any, but that wheresoever it is, it is always profitable for all things.

Thus now you see what godliness is good for, and how profitable a thing it is to all that sincerely follow after it, it being the only way whereby you may every one attain to true and real, to full and satisfying, to firm and constant, to eternal and everlasting riches, and that as certainly and infallibly, as if you were already in the actual possession of them. Go to now, all ye who admire and covet riches, and see if you can find out any better way of thriving in the world than by serving God; if you can, follow it with all your might and main. Go to now, ye that think it not worth your while to devote yourselves wholly to the service of God, that say as they did in Job, ch. xxi. 15. and in the prophet Malachi, ch. iii. 14. Consider what you have heard, and then tell me whether you have any cause to say so or no; or rather, whether you have not all the cause in the world to believe that the heavenly is the most profitable calling you can be of, and that there is more real advantage got by serving God, than there is by all other artifices, designs, and practices whatsoever: and therefore be advised to act accordingly for the future. I know you all desire to be rich, yea, to be much richer than you are, and it is my hearty desire and prayer to Almighty God, that you may be so too; but I am sure you can never be truly rich, unless you be truly pious; and that all your care and pains about other things will stand you in no stead, nor bring any real profit at all unto you: but if you sincerely follow after godliness, you will infallibly find that to be profitable for all things you can desire; for God himself hath said it is so, and therefore all such amongst you as are so wise as to prefer God's judgment before their own, as ever ye desire to be rich indeed, take this course: call in for all your thoughts and affections from this world, and fix

them only upon God ; set yourselves in good earnest to honour and obey him in all things you think, or speak, or do, firmly believing and trusting on Jesus Christ, for the acceptance of your persons and performances ; and then you will be rich indeed, both in this life and that which is to come.

END OF VOL. IV.

